



March 2010

Presbytery of Plains & Peaks

Presbytery Meeting - February 2010

“The Marks of the Church: The Church is One” was the theme of the February Presbytery meeting held in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Aptly, the meeting was co-hosted by Harmony Presbyterian Church and Hanbit Korean Presbyterian Fellowship. The Reverend Dr. Byron Wade, Vice-moderator of the General Assembly, delivered the keynote sermon and infused the meeting with his joy and enthusiasm. A delegation from the Chawama Presbyterian Church of Lusaka, Zambia shared music and dancing while helping us understand the joys and challenges of their ministry. The joint puppet ministry of Central and Westview Presbyterian Churches in Longmont, Colorado brought a smile to many faces. We also saw video about the mission response to Haiti, and the Highlands Summer Camp Program.

The Committee on Preparation on Ministry brought an inquirer to the floor of Presbytery to become a candidate - Jessica Graham - a member of First Presbyterian Church in Ft. Collins, Colorado. She was also elected as Pittsburgh Theological Seminary’s alternate Theological Student Advisory Delegate to the 219th General Assembly.

The Presbytery elected commissioners to the 219th General Assembly to be held in Minneapolis in July: the Reverends Nancy D’Ippolito and Sue Hoenshell-Brown, and elders Bob Powell (Ft. Collins, First) Susie Reed (Longmont, Westview). The Presbytery also elected Luke Black (Broomfield) as the Young Adult Advisory Delegate.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is still looking for a few people to fill vacancies on a few of the organizational units. If you are interested or if you know anyone who would be interested in one of the following vacancies, please contact the Presbytery office.

Congregational Vitality Workgroup

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| - Elder/Layperson | - Class of 2010 |
| - Minister | - Class of 2011 |

Youth Triennium

The Presbyterian Youth Triennium is an event sponsored by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Churches (CPC and CPCA) for the purpose of gathering Presbyterian and Reformed young people from all over the United States and the world together for worship, prayer, play and community. This year the Youth Triennium will be July 20-24, 2010 at Purdue University. Our Presbytery will be sending several young people and adult sponsors to the triennium. If you would like to contribute toward sending a young person either from your church or from another church in the Presbytery, donations are gratefully accepted and should be sent to the Presbytery treasurer.

Presbytery of Plains & Peaks

7257 W. 4th St. - Unit 4
Greeley, Colorado 80634
800-257-4583

www.plainsandpeaks.org

Executive Presbyter ~

Dan Saperstein

dan@plainsandpeaks.org

Stated Clerk ~

Lynn Smit

lynn@plainsandpeaks.org

Treasurer ~

Diane Kenning

dkenning@kenningfilter.com

Office Administrator ~

Bobbi Hoffman

bobbi@plainsandpeaks.org

Presbytery Website

The Presbytery website has a new look and a new host. Please check it out at www.plainsandpeaks.org for updated information, a calendar of events, and other interesting information.

Middle East Report Prompts Outcry

A report coming to the 2010 General Assembly this July has already stirred controversy around the hotly debated issue of denominational policy toward Israel and Palestine. Early in March, the Simon Wiesenthal Center (a staunchly pro-Israel advocacy group) sent an alert to its 300,000 activists proclaiming “Presbyterian Church declares war on Israel,” and asking them to click on a button to send emails to our denominational leaders. The alert has been picked up by other organizations and media outlets.

The focus of the alert was the report of the Middle East Task Group charged by the last assembly to bring a comprehensive review of PCUSA policy on the Israel-Palestine situation to this year’s gathering. The report was released in full on March 10 and can be found at www.pcusa.org/middleeastpeace. Individuals are encouraged to read the report rather than base judgments on second-hand reports of its contents.

The report, far from “declaring war” on Israel, affirms with “no ifs, ands, or buts” our commitment to the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign nation with secure borders. It reiterates the denominational social witness policy of the last sixty years, namely that we support a two-state solution in Palestine, full citizenship rights in a democratic society for all natural-born residents, and a renunciation of all forms of violence by both sides. It has softened the position of the 2004 General Assembly (which sparked a similar outcry) in that it no longer calls for a strategy of economic divestment from certain companies (such as Caterpillar) that significantly profit from the current Israeli policies of institutional violence against Palestinians, but merely denounces them.

In addition to this report, the Assembly will be receiving a report on a theological understanding of Christians and Jews, and one on Presbyterian – Muslim relationships. All are likely to generate significant debate at the assembly. None have any official standing until they are adopted by the Assembly following debate and amendment.

Interesting Church News

Boulder, First has a Business Administrator job opening. They are thankful for Bob Stover's excellent service to the church. Bob has announced his retirement as Business Administrator, effective May 7, 2010. A Search Committee has been formed to identify qualified candidates and select Bob's replacement. The Committee will look both internally within our own congregation and externally. If anyone is interested in applying for the position or if you know of someone who might be, please contact Sandy Lutz in the church office for additional information. Resumes should be sent electronically to Sandy Lutz (SandyL@fpcboulder.org) and the deadline for submission is April 2, 2010.

Forty six people at the Presbyterian Church of Broomfield in Broomfield, Colorado are a little past the half-way point in reading the entire Bible through The Bible in 90 Days program. They started their journey on January 11 and will finish on April 8. One of the highlights of the program has been meeting in small groups each week to discuss their progress and share questions and “aha” moments. Not all participants are members of the church – several are just members of the community who decided to participate when the church advertised the program prior to its beginning. One small group has decided to keep meeting and to re-read the entire Bible, but at a slower pace. Another group has decided to form a women’s Bible study group. Others are discussing starting in-depth studies of individual books of the Bible. A celebration brunch is scheduled for the Sunday after Easter for those who complete the program.

Presbyterian Women - Spring Gathering

Weldon Valley Presbyterian in Goodrich, Colorado - Saturday, April 24, 2010 - 9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Our theme is HELPING HANDS LOVING HEARTS and the special guest speaker will be AnnMarie Arbo, Executive Director of Loveland-Berthoud Interfaith Hospitality Network and a member of First United Presbyterian Church of Loveland. AnnMarie will be speaking about homelessness. Also on the agenda is an introduction of the next Horizon Bible study on Revelation by the Reverend Sue Spencer of Akron, CO.

We are inviting anyone that works with the homeless through their group, congregation, or community to share what they are doing and how we can support those programs. For more information contact: Carol Heltenberg, 970-848-5812 or e-mail rech@plains.net.

Following is a partial list of items that AnnMarie said would be useful in their work. We would suggest that each group have a collection and those coming to the Spring Gathering bring the items to pass along. I am sure many of these items could be used by many programs.

- Personal items: shampoo, conditioner, deodorant (men & women), paper products & feminine items, razors, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, etc.
- Gift cards to Wal-Mart, KMart, etc.
- Gas cards in \$5-10 range
- Have many children items, but little girls like hair decorations and boys like cars

AnnMarie Arbo was born, raised and educated to be a nurse in England. After discovering that she took the patients’ heartbreak and hurting too deeply, she left nursing to work in the employment and hospitality field. In 1983 she married an American and came to the US where she continued working in the employment field. After a move to Colorado and several jobs, AnnMarie managed the Lovelander B&B until it was sold. While working two other jobs, she started volunteering at Loveland-Berthoud Interfaith Hospitality Network. Eventually she became a coordinator and then applied for and was hired as Executive Director. (Read AnnMarie’s complete bio in the program book at the Spring Gathering)

The Interfaith Hospitality Network is part of large network started in 1981 in New York City to feed the homeless. The Loveland-Berthoud group was started in 2000 and has assisted 176 families since then. The face of homelessness has changed with more two parent families and single fathers entering the program. The reasons for homelessness are many and they will always be amongst our population, but huge efforts are in place to assist the many families that for whatever reason they have become homeless. (read more about LB – IHN, see the Spring Gathering program book.

Letter from Lois Vermeer, Former Presbytery Mission Advocate

My dear Presbytery Friends: (This letter is long overdue, I apologize for that.)

Between November 30 and December 12 [my 75th birthday], I sold my Greeley house, bought one in Littleton, Colorado, to be close to my daughter and family, and moved. In December, I lost three very important people in my life: Ida Wesslund, who was my spiritual mentor, from North Platte, Nebraska; Jean Losey from Greeley, Colorado, an amazing woman who taught me so much about living and dying, and my dear big brother, Dale Hubers.

I want all of you to know how much I appreciate the part that our Presbytery played in my endeavor as Mission Advocate, especially the CMPW members. After I made the decision not to transfer my membership with First United Presbyterian Church in Greeley, Colorado, to the EPC, I needed something to be passionate about. I asked Jim Kidd and Dan Saperstein for help. I wanted to promote the cause of mission, as well as introducing different ways to do mission and facilitate networking between the 41 churches in our Presbytery.

It goes without saying that there is no way I could have put this together if it had not been for Dennis Hurianek. His computer skills, expertise, enthusiastic approach, hours of time, and advice were an integral part of this program.

Re: Construction of the 4-Plex home for nurses in Embangweni, Malawi. I will be notifying all donors why the home has not been built. You donated \$2,000 to this cause. You will find a copy of that letter below this one.

THANK YOU! May God Bless you. I include, with his permission, the Reverend Bob Sheldon's remark: "We are all in this together."

To: Dear friends, family and all supporters of my Malawi project:

This project, the construction of a 4-Plex home for nurses at the Embangweni Hospital in Malawi, Africa, is near and dear to me. Original projection for ground breaking was March 15, 2009. As much as this upsets me, I must tell you that construction has not begun.

My goal was based on an estimate given personally and verbally to me of \$40,000. \$43,000 was raised.

An individual donor alerted me regarding the need to verify the construction cost estimate. It was significantly higher than the original \$40,000. MBF raised questions, which resulted in an investigation by the Synod of Livingstonia, a Presbyterian body that governs Embangweni. That uncovered mismanagement of funds, and resulted in the subsequent dismissal of staff and contractors at Embangweni.

The Synod asked that funds not be sent until they could complete their investigation so that when funds are sent, that they will be used properly for construction. Will Browne, the MBF Executive Director, is in periodic contact with the Synod checking on their progress and trying to move this project along. The sense of urgency in Malawi doesn't seem to be the same as here in the U.S. :)

The need for this staff housing is still there, and our church partners in Malawi are grateful for the gifts made by their partner donors through MBF for this project at Embangweni. The funds are being held in a safe and separate account, awaiting word from them as to the appropriate time to send the funds and begin construction. Accountability and stewardship of these donated funds is a serious concern for MBF.

I greatly appreciate your confidence and trust in me. A quote from a friend in Embangweni: "Lois's problems and complaints through MBF triggered a major part of the investigation, so some good will come out of it." The home will be built, it has to be, I will keep you informed.

Sincerely and in Christ's Love,
Lois Vermeer

970-590-2410 (cell) - lvermeer@comcast.net - 10222 W. Ida Ave.; Littleton, CO 80127

Highlands Celebrates Sixty-five Years of Ministry in 2010

Did you know that in August of 1945, Boulder Presbytery authorized its Christian Education Committee to appoint a committee in order to secure a location and raise funds for a tract of land for a new camp and conference ministry? This act of the Presbytery is considered the birth of the current Highlands ministry located in the beautiful mountains of Allenspark, Colorado. What began as a small and primitive summer-only operation has transformed and grown into a first-class facility, operating year round and serving over 17,000 guests annually. To celebrate sixty-five years of strong and vibrant ministry, Highlands will be offering special events and programs throughout 2010 in honor of the ministry of Highlands and the hard work and vision of those initial pioneers in camp and retreat ministry. Come up and celebrate sixty-five years of grace in a beautiful place with us! Highlands wants to ensure that we get our 65th anniversary information and specials to all of the Highlands family. Do you know a former camper, counselor, volunteer, etc. who does not receive our newsletter? If so, please call (303-747-2888) or email Holly (registrar@highlandscamp.org) at Highlands to share names and contact information for these friends of Highlands.

Highlands Spring Work Days

Saturday, May 8 and Saturday, May 15 - 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Lunch is provided

This spring, we are offering two work days for you to choose from, so that you can share your gifts and talents while volunteering at Highlands! Mark your calendar now and plan to join in the fellowship and fun. We'll be opening cabins and buildings that have been closed for the winter and doing special projects to help prepare for an incredible summer program.

Please call (303-747-2888) or e-mail Holly (registrar@highlandscamp.org) to let us know to expect you!

2010 Summer Camp Curriculum . . . "Be a Hero"

The summer camp theme for 2010 at Highlands is "Be a Hero." At Highlands, being a hero for God means knowing that, through the power of Christ, when we recognize a need we are able to take a risk and step out in faith to act with love and justice. Being a hero for God involves understanding that God calls and equips us to do some of what Jesus and other biblical heroes did. And for us, like the Biblical heroes, this work is often done in simple ways, with every day things, and by ordinary people. We invite you to join us this summer to discover and discern what it means to be a hero in and for Jesus Christ.

The Milestone Ride and Benefit for Highlands

On July 17, 2010, Cleon Kimberling, a long-time Highlands supporter and committee member, will celebrate his 80th birthday. On that day, Cleon invites you to join him in celebration with the Milestone Ride – a bicycle event 20 miles in length and 3,029 feet in elevation gain from Hall Ranch in Lyons, Colorado, to the doors of the Highlands Retreat Center. If you are not a bicyclist, you can still join in the festivities and show your support of Highlands by participating in a jig-saw puzzle tournament, or a hike around the property! More information is available on-line at www.highlandscamp.org.



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

Writing Your Spiritual Memoirs - September 27-
30, 2010

Be sure to go to www.way-points.org and check out over thirty other programs that will be offered around the nation!



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

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

Be sure to go to www.exploritas.org today to register and check out the other programs that are offered!

From the Lions' Den

You may be familiar with the parable of the frog in the kettle. It's not in the Bible, but it has the ring of truth. The parable goes something like this: If you drop a live frog into a kettle full of hot water the frog will jump out immediately. However, if you place a frog into cool water and slowly increase the water temperature, the frog will stay in the kettle until it is cooked to death. The point of the parable for churches is simple: congregations learn to accept slow, steady decline as normal until they are too weak to recover. The threat to the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks, and to many of our constituent congregations, is that we are the frog in the kettle.

The statistical summary for 2009 shows a continued slow, steady decline in membership and giving for the Presbytery and most churches. Our overall membership declined a little over 2% last year. That may not seem like much: a loss of four members in a congregation of 200. And, it is one of the lowest levels of decline in recent years. Nevertheless, it is not to be taken for granted. It is a deadly trend, a slow acting poison on our congregational health. The 2% figure equals the loss of a mid-sized congregation in our presbytery in one year.

At the same time, our contributions to our Presbytery mission budget are declining at a far faster rate: the final 2009 figures show a drop of about 5% over 2008, and 2010 pledges show this rate to be continuing, if not accelerating. This will undoubtedly require cuts in our mission budget that will be significant and painful. (As it is, roughly 45% of the budget now goes to support Highlands, and about 40% pays the salary and housing for the Executive Presbyter, leaving only 15% or so "discretionary" mission funds.) Both of these trends must change, and soon, if our Presbytery is to maintain vital congregations and mission.

There are pockets of good news, however. Seventeen churches saw a net membership increase in 2009, led by Milliken, Goodrich, and Greeley - Family of Christ. In terms of percentage increase, the leaders are Goodrich, Greeley - Family of Christ, and Wray. Overall, the churches showing growth are small membership churches (Greeley - Family of Christ, for example, has grown by nearly 50% since 2004, from 53 to 77). Those small gains, while noteworthy, do not begin to offset the decline in our largest congregations in which small percentage losses translate into large losses in absolute terms.

Let's not sit and wait for the water to boil us to death. Let's take specific, immediate steps to transform our churches from passive frogs to leapers and jumpers. Then, God willing, we will halt the slow death that threatens us and find new vitality and resources for Christ's mission.

