



Synod Snaps

*Weekly e-news from the Synod of Alaska-Northwest,
A judicatory of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

December 4, 2009

On Top of the World

A reflection by the Rev. Joyce M. Emery, Transitional Synod Executive

Yesterday was a really good day for life! The morning began with my two one-year-old grand babies who are toddling together exploring the world. One toddler is so much fun – but two is a joy beyond description. They have also learned to hug. Oh my.... The next part of the day was a staff pizza and salad lunch before we decorated the entry to our Synod office. We pulled out the old fake tree, fluffed the branches (thanks Christa!), and hung the lights and ornaments. Sarah put up the crèche and we were thrilled when she shouted out that she had again “found Jesus.” We worked really well together – and the tree looks lovely.

The late afternoon found me praying a prayer of dedication at Skyline First Hill and assisting in the cutting of the grand-opening ribbon. What a great celebration as we welcomed new and future residents, neighbors and partners! I prayed because of the commitment of passionate Presbyterians in the Synod through the years who continue to nurture a vision of helping care for our aging population. There are so many who have worked hard to make a dream come true at Skyline First Hill. Interim President and CEO of Presbyterian Retirement Communities Northwest reminded us in a recent letter that in 2009 over \$1,250,000 of the charitable PRCN dollars went to subsidizing residents who have either run out of funds or need funds to cover gaps in government reimbursement.

This is only one stream of charity provided by PRCN– but one that would make the founders feel like their goals had been accomplished. One of the new Presbyterian pastors who had recently joined the Board of Directors joined me on a tour. We finished our evening on the 24th floor balcony overlooking the Seattle skyline. Mt. Rainier was standing tall in all her glory. The ribbon of tail-lights of the afternoon rush hour wound their way down the valley. Together we could pick out so many landmarks that remind us of the people who love, who live and labor in this part of the City. What a privilege to have prayed over the Skyline project these last several years. (And read lots of reports.) May this community of residents be a bright light on First Hill as they weave their lives into the lives of their neighbors! The Seattle skyline has changed again because of the committed disciples of Jesus Christ. Look up to the East when you near the Seneca Street exit!

Looking Ahead

December 7-11	Western Area Staff Conference
December 14	Council Meeting Packets mailed
Dec. 24-Jan. 1	Christmas Holiday, Synod Office Closed
January 11	Rural-Remote Task Group conference call meeting

Proverb of the Week

*Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

Proverbs 31:9

Prayer for the Week

The Camel

Lord,
do not be displeased.
There is something to be said for pride
against thirst, mirages, and sandstorms;
and I must say
that, to face and rise above
these arid desert dramas,
two humps
are not too many,
nor an arrogant lip.
Some people criticize
my four flat feet,
the base of my pile of joints,
but what should I do
with high heels
crossing so much country,
such shifting dreams,
while upholding my dignity?
My heart wrung
by the cries of jackals and hyenas,
by the burning silence,
the magnitude of Your cold stars,
I give You thanks, Lord,
for this my realm,
wide as my longings
and the passage of my steps.
Carrying my royalty
in the aristocratic curve of my neck
from oasis to oasis,
one day shall I find again
the caravan of the magi?
And the gates of Your paradise?

Amen.

-- From *Prayers from the Ark and the Creatures' Choir*, by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold

Noteworthy News and Events

Communicating Faith in Today's World

Join the [Religion Communication Congress](#) in Chicago, **April 7-10, 2010**, for a once-a-decade multi-faith forum of all levels of communicators of religion!

This extraordinary event brings together over 1,200 communications professionals to expand our experience and broaden our perspective on embracing change.



- **Social change invites us to new ministries**
- **Religious change invites us to new dialogue**
- **Technological change entices us to new modes of reaching out**

As communicators, we have ever advancing tools, but we also see a power shift in publishing: through tools such as blogs, everyone has a voice. How do we harness this power for the good of our organizations?

Top reasons why you should be there!

- Challenging plenary speakers on timely issues with global impact
- Over 50 skills-building workshops to teach you cutting edge communication
- Expert roundtable interest groups for information sharing among communications pros
- Networking and ideas exchange with an interfaith, global gathering of communications professionals

[RCCongress 2010](#) is the place to be as we explore the changing landscape, exchange views, educate ourselves, and embrace the challenge of effectively communicating faith in today's world. Hope to see you there!

Gifts of Hope

[Church World Service](#) offers great gift ideas this Christmas season. The Best Gift Catalog lets you give gifts of animals and food, gifts that help women and children, and gifts that aid in water shortages/cleanliness and emergency kits.

It's a win-win--Christmas gifts for your loved ones and basics for families in need! [Give the gift of hope today!](#)



Opportunities at Whitworth **Certificate in Teaching the Bible** Feb.-May, 2010

Church leaders are expected to teach the Bible in various settings with a variety of different constituents. The Certificate in Teaching the Bible Program is designed to give pastors, Sunday school teachers and lay ministry leaders insight into using the Bible more effectively with children, youth and adults. [More...](#)



Preaching Clinic Feb - May, 2010

Good preaching is at the heart of effective ministry. The preaching clinic provides an opportunity for pastors to come together with peers for the purpose of sharpening preaching skills in a safe and supportive environment. We will talk about the art and dynamics of good preaching and work at strengthening and honing preaching skills through the use of sermon videotapes and in-class preaching and reflection. [More...](#)

Diploma in Lay Pastoral Ministry **June 7-11 and June 14-18, 2010**

Churches and religious organizations are looking for qualified men and women to serve in non-ordained positions of pastoral leadership in the church. Unfortunately, many otherwise qualified people are reluctant to pursue these positions because they do not feel adequately prepared biblically and theologically, or they find themselves lacking the practical skills they need to be successful in ministry. Others are already involved in ministry positions but feel limited by their lack of training and ongoing opportunities for development and support. [More...](#)

Diploma in Worship, Theology and the Arts

Whitworth's Diploma in Worship, Theology, and the Arts is designed to help train, equip, and support church musicians and other worship leaders to serve more effectively in paid and unpaid leadership positions in the Presbyterian Church (USA), as well as in other denominations. The program balances courses in theology with study in the history, development and current issues in worship and arts ministry.

Ministry Through Older Adults

Earlier this year Rev. Ben Lindstrom, pastor at Southminster PC in Seattle took a three month sabbatical. Part of his time away was spent visiting churches in various parts of the United States, exploring effective ministries to and through older adults. His thesis is that this immense crowd of persons in the life of our church are a great resource and amazing gift, a gift that can enable all of us to be all that God has created and called us to be.

Rev. Lindstrom shares what he is learning about how we, the church, can enable older persons to be their best selves and be more effective givers.

Further Reading

MINISTRY THROUGH OLDER ADULTS

Death can come at any time in your life but growing older is a gift that comes only to some.

Now, the question for older adults is, "What are you going to do if you happen to be given the gift of growing older?"

The Bible story says that God created everything with well thought out intentions and with a deep desire that we would see everything, simply everything that has been given to us, as an opportunity to continually demonstrate to everyone around us how wonderfully and how well God has loved us, God does love us, God will love us.

As a pastor who has cared deeply for older persons through the course of 40 years of ministry, I now see I've had it all wrong. My previous question to older persons was, "What can I do for you as you struggle through your older years?" When the better question would have been, "What can YOU give to me and to others out of your giftedness of being older?"

I now understand that I can best affirm your identity, I can best enlarge your abilities, I can best enable your life by helping you identify and utilize the gift of you. The gift that God is in and through you.

For, in our older age we have more to give than ever before. As I reflect upon my own life I now realize that God, over the years, has invested heavily in me - at great expense. For I have received the best of mentors, and an extraordinary abundance of wise lessons. And at great effort and energy God has patiently ground me down to a fine instrument.

God has refined me into a precious metal - growing me into a firmer, simpler, quieter, warmer, more effective person.

For now, my life is no longer about me. Now, in my later years, I have more authenticity, more soul, more grace and there is less of me - less judgment, less wasting time competing, less wasted time rationalizing than ever before.

So, as older persons, we now have more to give than ever before. Now, as older persons, God can now use us far more effectively than ever before. Now, the question for me as a pastor and for the church is:

- 1) How can we help you, the older person, to FLY?
- 2) How can we enable you, as an older person, to contribute your storehouse of wisdom, insights, experience, gifts?
- 3) How can we free you to teach us such great truths as,
 - a. success is not about being naturally gifted but about being fully committed
 - b. change is but an opportunity to trust God more
 - c. it is God who has the power - our only task is to learn how to get out of the way so that His power may increase and make everything new again.

Here are some things I am learning how we, the church, can enable older persons to be their best selves and be more effective givers.

Increase in SDOP Grant Funds

The National Office of the Self-Development of People has informed our Synod that the National Committee has approved an additional \$15,000 for the validation and funding of projects which meet the SDOP criteria of being owned, controlled, and directly benefiting economically poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged people. The deadline for using these funds is December 31, 2009! As with other funds available to committees, these funds cannot be carried over into 2010, so please take advantage of this great gift!



To apply for a grant,
visit <http://www.synodnw.org/Committees/SelfDevelopmentofPeople/tabid/1210/Default.aspx>

St. James Receives Funds from GAMC

The [General Assembly Mission Council](#) recently awarded St. James Presbyterian Church (North Puget Sound Presbytery) funds from a General Assembly restricted fund. Funds in the amount of \$1,123 will be used for a literacy program for Chinese and Spanish-speaking Americans. Congratulations, St. James!

For more information, visit the [General Assembly Mission Council](#) page on the [PC \(USA\)](#) website.

Links & Resources

Synod MDC Loan Program: www.synodmdc.org

Presbytery of Alaska: www.presbofak.org

Presbytery of Central Washington: www.cwpresby.org

Presbytery of the Inland Northwest: www.presbyinw.org

Presbytery of North Puget Sound: www.npspresbyterians.com

Presbytery of Olympia: www.olypres.org

Presbytery of Seattle: www.presbytery.org

Presbytery of Yukon: www.pbyukon.synodnw.org

Presbyterian Church (USA) www.pcusa.org

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance www.pcusa.org/pda



"God's grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love imperishable." - Ephesians 6:24 [NEB]

On behalf of the Synod Staff,

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