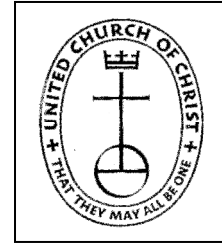


AWARE
A Monthly newsletter
supporting the building of community
in the NPCUCC
a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-national community of faith
June 2008

The Northern Plains Conference
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As I Look At It:

The Courage to Hope

I remember a young single mother from our last parish, named June. June came to us for a handout and after some encouragement allowed us to help her find shelter, day care for her three-year old daughter and a job at a local McDonalds. June was hard working, and her manager began to give her extra responsibility. One day the manager offered June the opportunity to take extra training and begin the process of preparation to become a manager of a McDonalds. After some coaxing, June started the program. She went through each step with caution and care. When June came to the end of the program, there was a graduation and a certificate was awarded. Several people of the church hosted a coffee hour after service to honor her accomplishment. But June, in spite of the fact that this meant a significant increase in salary and opened the doors for further advancement, was uneasy and unsure. In spite of the fact that June had a job in a McDonalds site as assistant manager, with assurance that in six months the current manager would move on and she could take over as "The Manager". In spite of the fact that she had found a nice apartment near that site and near a good school for her daughter. June was overcome with "What Ifs". What if I lose my job? What if the school is not as good as it seems? What if the staff of the McDonalds does not like me? And on and on. When I finally asked what was going on, a teary eyed June simply said, "I am Afraid To Hope".

June is not alone in her fear of hope. We all have had those times when the future has opened for us and we do not grasp onto it because we are afraid to commit to the potential that such a future holds. If this is true for a person, and I can assure you it is, it is doubly so for a congregation. While it often is natural, and in the short view, wise to pull back and cautiously circle the wagons, we thereby turn our back on the future dawning before us. It takes gargantuan courage to step forth in hope. That is right, It takes courage to hope. To expect that our dreams can lead to a future and our efforts can produce something meaningful and that in partnership with God we can move beyond the boundaries of our personal comfort zone takes courage. In the midst of all those forces outside of the realm of our control do we have the courage to hope? Do we have the courage to hope that God's empowering grace will strengthen us?

Do we have the courage to place our hope in the assurance that God's Will will guide us? Do we have the courage to trust that resources will be there to complete that which we start?

Let's face it – anyone can be a cynic, but to hope takes faith. Anyone can radiate doom and gloom but to be aglow with hope one has to have a vision seeing beyond immediate to the future's potential. Anyone can justify despair but it takes real courage to overcome it with hope. I dare say that such courage is a test and may well be a challenge to our faith.

This year as we approach our Annual Meeting may we have the faith to face our world with gratitude to God for the many blessings we have found and the courage to face God's future with hope. After all, hope is not a fool jumping off the edge of the mountain, hope is a pilgrim on a journey into tomorrow.

June did become the manager of a McDonalds and did quite well. Her easy-going personality and compassionate approach to people helped put both her staff and her customers at ease. She now hopes for a promotion to a district office.

Grace and Peace
Wade

Youth To Assemble Hygiene Kits at the NPCUCC Annual Meeting

During their Friday evening gathering in Hankinson, our NPCUCC youth will assemble Hygiene Kits for distribution through Church World Service to areas of need. To prepare for this and support the youth we ask congregations to collect items for this kit and bring them to the Annual Meeting. There will be space in the registration area to deposit your items. There will also be a jar to receive donations that will go for the cost of shipping the hygiene kits. The items needed for a hygiene kit are: 1 hand towel 16"x28", 1 Washcloth, 1 wide-tooth comb, 1 nail clipper (no metal files or emery boards). 1 bar of soap (bath size in a wrapper), 1 toothbrush (in original packaging), 6 band-Aids (Please do not add toothpaste to the hygiene kit). It costs about \$2 to send a Hygiene kit.

Seeking Youth Camp Directors

Anyone wanting to help with our Summer Youth Camping program should contact Darcy Borden. Don't miss this opportunity for a meaningful experience as you enrich the life of the youth of the Conference. For more information, please check www.npcucc.org/flier.

"Tents of Hope" Painters are Needed

"The mission of the Tents of Hope Project is to support a one-year process in which people respond as communities to the crisis in Darfur, Sudan by creating tents that are both unique works of art and ongoing focal points within

communities for learning about, assisting and establishing relationships with the people of Sudan. The tents are not answers in themselves. Rather, they are points of entry for more concrete forms of Darfur advocacy. - "Tents of Hope" Website

At the Annual Meeting this year, we will have an opportunity to take part in this vital mission project, as we paint our tent with pictures and visions of our hope to go to a refugee camp that is home to Sudan refugees.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTq7OfM0Y9A> is the website for a video. <http://www.tentsofhope.org> tells more about the project. Please contact Lindy Holt at ethelindholt@gra.midco.net or 701-788-3755 with your questions and ideas.

We invite congregations to host the Tent of Hope on a Sunday when they lift up the tragic conditions in Darfur. The tent is available for Congregations to use.

NPCUCC Family Campout

NPCUCC members are invited to a special family campout at the International Peace Gardens this summer (June 27 – 29). Please check out the flier and registration form on the web site www.npcucc.org/flier. Questions? Please call pastor Susan Lester at 701 269 3078.

Calling all NPCUCC youth:

The Summer of 2008 will be exciting and interesting for the youth of NPCUCC. It begins June 6th with the youth gathering at the Annual Meeting and then onto the National Youth Event July 22nd – 30th and finally the campout at Wesley Acres August 3 – 7. The flier that describes each event in detail is on the NPCUCC website [www.npcucc.org/fliers/Summer Camp Brochure](http://www.npcucc.org/fliers/Summer_Camp_Brochure).

New Orleans's Mission Trip Opportunities!!!!!!

Want to help people in need and deepen in your faith at the same time? A mission trip to New Orleans is one opportunity. People from our Conference went last year. Everyone can help – young and old, with carpentry gifts or not. Mission trips are life giving experiences, so please pray about how God is calling you to go and help.

Please contact me by phone – 1-701-430-0727 or by email ethelindholt@gra.midco.net. Do it today and share that you are interested so we can get some trips planned!

Lindy Holt, NPCUCC Disaster Coordinator

Did You Know???

...about the Congregational Vitality resources that are available through your OCWM Support. These resources are designed to be helpful to congregations large and small, rural and urban. During the past years the NPCUCC has drawn upon these resources in a variety of ways. We have attended new church development workshops, we have hosted church vitality projects (six gatherings over an 18 month period), as well as evangelism workshops that have been attended by as many as 20 congregations. The upcoming pastors' workshop in August (22 – 23) is another example of ways in which your OCWM money is at work in the NPCUCC.

New Additions to the Media Resource Center

The following new DVD's have arrived and are available through the Media Resource Center: "Encountering God in Scripture", "Embracing Aging" and "Kilowatt Ours." If you have questions about any of these do not hesitate to call the Conference Office.

Pastor's and Lay Leaders Workshop Scheduled for August 22 – 23

Charlene J. Smith of the National Church will be with us in North Dakota leading the workshop, "God is Still Speaking, Do Not Fear." It aims to empower pastors and lay leaders in guiding congregations through the times when confusion and uncertainty often keep us from moving forward. Make plans aware that costs of the program and the meals will be covered by the Conference, so participants will only need to be responsible for their lodging costs. Zion United Church of Christ in Medina will host the workshop. The event begins with dinner at 6:00 pm (ct) on Friday and will conclude by 4:00 pm (ct) on Saturday. Please contact the Conference Office for hotel accommodations. You will find a flier and registration form on the Conference Web Site at www.npcucc.org/flier.

Stewardship Task Force Seeks Mission Ambassadors

The Mission Ambassadors project which began Fall 2007 will continue into the coming year. We invite congregations to continue to seek Mission Ambassadors from among their lay leaders. These are folk who could be trained to bring the message of the ways in which the UCC and the NPC answer the call to be in mission in the name of Jesus the Christ. Each Mission Ambassador would visit a number of congregations with the message of hope and promise. Mission Ambassador Training sessions will take place September 13 at 11:00 a.m., Sept 18 at 6:00 p.m. and Sept 20 at 11:00 a.m. Any questions? Contact the Conference Office.

Best Thoughts and Prayers Go with Heather Bodwell

Heather Bodwell has served as the pastor of Salem United Church of Christ in New Salem and Associate pastor of Bismarck United Church of Christ. She has moved on to become a full time Air Force Chaplain. She began her duties mid May at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Her standing will stay with the Northern Plains Conference. Our best wishes and prayers to Heather and her husband Ken as they begin this new chapter of service in our Redeemer's name.

NPCUCC Congregations Seeking Leadership

Bismarck United Church of Christ, seeks a director of Christian Ed.

Salem United Church of Christ, New Salem is seeking pastoral leadership

The Schedule for June

Date	Time	Event	Location
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6/4	12:00 Noon	Progressive Faith Network	Bismarck
6/5 (Tent)	-----	Wilson Health Care	-----
6/5	3:00 pm (ct)	Conference Committees	Hankinson
6/6	9:00 am (ct)	Conference Council	Hankinson
6/6-6/8	-----	Annual Meeting	Hankinson
6/10	11:00 am (mt)	MV Cluster	Marcy Dawson's Home
6/15	-----	World Board Rep arrives in NPCUCC	Bismarck
6/16	-----	Meetings with World Board Rep	Bismarck
6/22	8:30 am (mt)	100 th Anniversary Celebration	Reeder
6/27-6/29	-----	NPCUCC Family Camp	Peace Garden
6/27-6/30	-----	CM retreat	-----
6/28	-----	Anniversary Open House	Carrington
6/29	-----	Organ Recital	Carrington