

The Northern Plains Conference  
United Church of Christ  
1200 E Highland Acres Rd.,  
Bismarck, ND 58501-1252  
Telephone: 701-255-1104  
<http://www.npcucc.org>



**AWARE**  
A Monthly newsletter  
supporting the building of community  
in the NPCUCC  
a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-  
lingual, multi-national community of faith  
**October 2009**

### ***As I Look At It:***

As our churches chug back to life from the summer quiet time, one question that comes to mind as we begin to commit time and money is, "What is our mission?" While the answer may seem to be self evident, the reality is that there is a lot of room to interpret the mission of a church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There can be many points of view that will not all agree, yet each may have a grain of truth. When we get to specifics, there is a great range of ideas as to how we can respond.

In its most basic form the church is about enabling people to be empowered by the grace of God. Whether that empowerment comes individually or in community depends on the situation, yet the church remains the distribution center for the grace of God. As such, what the church does has a direct impact on the lives of people. The church is not a valve that can turn the flow of the grace of God on or off. It is a community of people called to share the grace that comes as an endless blessing from God. The church is fulfilling its call when it shares that grace with those who are needy. It is delinquent when there are those in need who have not had the opportunity to be touched by God's blessing. The reason this is so important is that God's grace changes lives. It is a resurrection. It is a gift of new life.

The gift of God's grace is the touch of God's transforming presence. It involves making a difference in some very real, earthly ways in the lives of God's people. The mission of the church is to be about the transformation God seeks for all. It is about helping our brothers and sisters find new beginnings. This makes the church a very special community. It is unlike anything else on the face of this mother Earth. The church is where those who are trapped in their life can find courage to live a new way. It is where we who struggle with our demons find a way to overcome them. Let me say it again, the church is about transformation. It is about pulling back the shades and allowing the sunshine of God's vision to bathe in brilliance lives trapped in the darkness of confusion and fear. It is about bringing together those who are alone so that the world does not seem so large.

The church is also about the transformation of communities. It is about being the light of hope in the midst of despair. It is about opening a new door to tomorrow when resignation has thrown a black pall over everything. During the time when Peg and I were involved in ministry in the Twin Cities, we learned of some of the most desperate of communities. Communities so deprived that neither government nor industry could make a difference. Still, these communities had hope. It comes from the lights of the church proclaiming that they were not alone and that God had a vision for them. That in God's economy they were not disposable. Many of these congregations declared to all that their lives and that of their communities were linked. They were not fleeing to the suburbs; they were going to continue to be a channel of God's grace and light into the darkness and decay that surrounded them. In many of our small North Dakota communities, the only organization that has the long institutional memory is the church. Let us remember that the God who touches all of life with hope and promise has not out migrated. God is there with the transforming grace that lights fires of hope. Sometimes overcoming the forces of death and sometimes giving needed rest.

The mission of the church is to be a channel of God's grace: To be about transformation; To be about hope; To be about new life. May all that we do enable us to answer this call.

*Grace and Peace  
Wade*

### **The ACADEMY For Vital Christianity**

The Northern Plains Conference in cooperation with United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is offering meaningful educational events for lay and ordained pastors. Through the Academy for Vital Christianity program of UTS, these classes will be available to all who are interested. The first class is: Interpreting the Older Testament with Integrity, by Dr. Richard Weis, on Oct. 10 and Nov. 7 at the Congregational UCC Church in Valley City, ND. The next is: Wrestling with Problems of Evil and Suffering, taught by Eleazar Fernandez on Oct. 24 and Nov. 21 at First Congregational UCC in Fargo. For more information, please check the NPCUCC website [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org) under flier. We invite participants in the lay ministry program and others who are interested in taking either or both of these classes to contact the Conference Office for scholarship information.

### **Time to Register for EVANGELISM IN THE PRAIRIE:**

Charlene J. Smith will be hosting a special event November 13 & 14 at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Fargo aimed at empowering congregational large and small to find growth within the congregation and growth in numbers. Evangelism is so much more than grabbing someone by the arm and asking them if they are saved. It is sharing a vital message in such a way that people want more. It is becoming the channel for God's grace into the midst of often confused lives. This workshop will be a time for pastors and lay leaders to explore and share their hopes and their strengths. It will be an opportunity to share encouragement, support and ideas. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Fargo Super 8. Please reserve your room by Oct. 22nd. The Conference will cover the cost of the program and meals, leaving lodging and travel for the congregations. For more information and for registration information please go to the NPCUCC website [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org) under forms or call the Conference Office.

## 82 – 4 – 2010

At the Annual Meeting in Minot, we projected a short fall in the 2010 budget. This is a call for us to raise the needed funds for the ministry to which God calls us as a Conference, as God did our Lord. When he was about his Earthly Ministry, he called 12 disciples to follow him, experiencing his life and ministry so they could pass it on. Jesus also called and sent 70 into the towns and communities to spread his message of hope and new life. In all, Jesus called 82 to meet the church's needs.

So, we are calling 82 to meet the NPCUCC's needs for 2010, with a special donation of \$100 towards the Conference's financial health. Already a number have answered the call. This is a call to be part of the 82-4-2010 movement already well underway. Please take this as an invitation to make a special 82-4-2010 offering as a "Friend of the Conference." We also invite church groups to share in this special gathering. As the 70 and the 12, let us answer the call of the 82 – 4 – 2010 for NPCUCC.

### **Congregations seeking a pastor**

United Church of Christ, Wahpeton  
The Horizon Parish

### **There May Be Grant Money For Your Congregation's Project**

Money may be available for worthy church projects. For the information needed please see "What Enquiring Funders Want to Know," on the NPCUCC Website (<http://www.npcucc.org/html/grants.php>). R. J. Stohler, NPCUCC Grant Request Writer, will be glad to explore with you possible funding. You may contact him at 1537 48<sup>th</sup> St. S. #108, Fargo, ND 58103, [rjstohler@msn.com](mailto:rjstohler@msn.com), or through the Conference Office.

### **Tri Conference Discussion underway:**

Discussion is underway between the Northern Plains, Nebraska and South Dakota Conferences to explore ways that our three settings of the church might work more closely in the future. At this point, there is no set understanding of just how we would do that, but we want to develop that in the coming months. At the end of October, there will be a visioning meeting and we hope that gathering will bring some substance to our work. If any NPCUCC folk have suggestions, we invite you to contact the Conference Office so that we can receive your ideas and share them with the wider group.

### **Fall Youth Rally**

The plans are underway for the Fall Youth Rally to be held October 22 – 24 at Jamestown, North Dakota. The theme for this year is "To Go Boldly Where Christ has Called Us." All NPC youth are invited to attend this special time of fellowship and growth. For more information and for registration forms please check the NPCUCC website [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org) under forms or call the Conference Office.

### **New Salem To Install Ron Hildahl As Pastor**

The Rev. Ron Hildahl will be installed as the pastor of the Salem United Church of Christ of New Salem on Sunday, October 11, at 4:00 pm (ct). We invite all NPCUCC members (clergy and lay) to mark this date and make plans to attend this special gathering. Let us join to celebrate this special time in the life of one of our congregations and their recently called pastor.

### **What I Did This Summer by Jim Moos**

Jim Moos tells of his trip to East Timor, and of the developments there, in an article on the NPCUCC website. The web address is: [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org) under the E Messenger, Aware tab or call the Conference Office.

### **The Schedule For October**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
10/4	10:30 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	First Congregational/Hebron
10/4	1:00 pm (ct)	Strategic Planning	Hebron/First
10/8	12:00 Noon (ct)	NDHRC Development Comm.	Fargo
10/9	5:00 pm (ct)	CHYS Board Retreat	Bismarck
10/10	-----	CHYS Board Retreat	Bismarck
10/11	4:00 pm (ct)	Ron Hildahl Installed as Pastor of Salem UCC	New Salem
10/13	10:00 am (mt)	MV Cluster	Dickinson
10/14	11:00 am (ct)	Minot Cluster	Garrison
10/15	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Plymouth, Fargo
10/16	-----	Conference Committees	Jamestown
10/17	9:00 am (ct)	Conference Council	Jamestown
10/22-24	-----	Fall Youth Rally	Jamestown
10/26	10:30 am (ct)	Central Cluster	-----
10/28	12:00 Noon (ct)	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
10/29	9:00 am (ct)	Visioning Meeting	Sioux Falls, SD
10/31	-----	Council for Theological Education	Cleveland