

The Northern Plains Conference
United Church of Christ
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AWARE
A Monthly newsletter
supporting the building of community
in the
multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual,
multi-national community of faith
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As I Look At It:

In recent weeks when discussing various issues, especially health care, I have used the phrase, "IT IS A MORAL ISSUE." My reasoning is that one might approach this or any other subject from a purely economic, political or social perspective, but this limits our sense of the whole. For it is only when we look at it from a moral perspective that we take into account the entire picture. The dignity of a person as a child of God, the health of the person, the wellbeing of the entire person, the recognition of each person as being endowed with innate human rights, all are essential to the whole picture. This highlights the fact that while certain issues may have economic, political or social implications, when they deal with the well-being of God's people or God's creation (I would defy you to come up with something that does not), it is a moral issue.

It means that if we are going to look at something we have to look at it from such a faith perspective. We cannot turn our back on the viewpoint of a loving God. If we, for example, look at health care from a purely economic perspective we may end up with a program that is cost effective but that does not care for the well-being of all of God's children. The moral question does not give us an easy out when it comes to caring for our brothers and sisters in the family of God. What is politically or socially expedient may fall short. The moral question pushes us to look at the fullness of life. It calls us to take a broad perspective and ask ourselves how our response affects all of God's people. The moral question calls us to look at life through the eyes of the God who sacrificed Jesus Christ that we could live more fully. It calls us to look at the world in which we live and the impact that we are having upon it. This moves us beyond the perspective of convenience to the viewpoint of the God who calls all into being and who loves this world and every rock tree and life form in it. The moral perspective calls us to recognize that our lack of understanding is not a basis from which we have the right to hate. We cannot hate God's children simply because they do not fall into the confines of our familiarity.

I believe God expects us to view our world from this moral perspective. I believe God understands that when we do otherwise, when we let money, fear, or social pressure make a decision for us, we are taking a short cut that is not faithful. I believe God is saddened when one of God's children is neglected because it is economically or politically expedient. I believe God is angered when God's creation is abused because of our greed or gluttony. After all, Jesus did not die on the cross so that we could go through life wearing blinders.

Finally, I would have to say that I am morally and spiritually offended when my brothers and sisters use the faith to justify their fears and biases. Not only is this a lie, it is using God's name in vain and that my friends is a sin. I am tired of hearing people proof text the Bible to justify their hatred and to support the limits of their understanding, and I believe God is also. I cannot imagine that not comprehending the way someone else lives is a justification for acting unfaithfully towards a brother or sister in the family of God, who is walking down a different path of life.

In closing, I would invite you to celebrate the reality that viewing the world and all that is in it from the moral perspective gives life to all and empowers even the weakest to make a difference. Looking at life from God's perspective is viewing our world not only from what is before us today but from what can be before us tomorrow. The moral question is the life giving question for those who ask it and those who are touched by it.

I look forward to joining with you as together we explore the moral issues of our time.

Grace and Peace
Wade

David Hartson Resigns

December 27, we celebrated David Hartson's ministry as pastor of the Congregational United Church of Christ of Argusville. It is with gratitude that we reflect upon his years of service in the Northern Plains Conference. May God's blessed Spirit be with David and Kandi as they continue their faith journey.

New NPC Office Hours

The Office hours for the NPC will undergo a slight change in the coming months. The Office will be open from 1 – 5pm (ct) Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm (ct) on Wednesday. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the Conference Office or Wade Schemmel's cell at 701 471 3278.

Congregations Seeking a Pastor

United Church of Christ, Wahpeton
Congregational United Church of Christ, Independence/Mandaree
United Church of Christ of Lakota and the wider parish of which it is a part

Paul Nixon is coming to Jamestown

Thanks to the North Dakota Conference of Churches' support, Paul Nixon, author of "I Refuse to Serve a Dying Church" and "Finding Jesus on the Metro," will be coming to Jamestown to host a workshop March 22 & 23. The cost of the workshop will be \$40 plus lodging, travel and some meals. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Quality Inn where the program will be held. There will also be a banquet Monday evening (the cost of which is covered by registration as well as that of a concert by Chuck Suchy following the banquet). The registration form can be found on the Conference Web site. Checks accompanying the form can be made to the North Dakota Conference of Churches and send to the Conference Office.

A Request for Help in Searching for Grants:

We are in the process of assembling a Grant guide for the Northern Plains Conference. This would be a listing of areas in the life of the congregations of the Conference and of foundations and other granting sources that could help, fund those ministries. The expectation is that if a congregation finds an area of ministry in which they are interested, they can work with the Conference Grant Writer, (R. J. Stohler) to write a grant request to one or more of the sources listed. We are asking pastors and lay leaders to give some thought as to the areas of the life of the church that are seen as good opportunities for ministry if there were some extra dollars to work with. Please forward this list of possible grant options to the Conference Office.

Time to Make Plans for the Annual Meeting

Plans are well underway for what will surely be an exciting and meaningful Annual Meeting. Mark your calendars for the June 11 – 13, 2010 Annual Conference Meeting in Valley City. The theme for this year is "A Patchwork of Hope, Building a Community." We are again inviting congregations that have not already done so to submit a quilt section for the Conference quilt. Last year we were able to put together one quilt and this year we are looking at assembling another one. More information will be forth coming as we continue to prepare for our annual gathering.

New Developments in the Great Plains Consortium

The last gathering of the Great Plains Consortium visioning meeting decided to develop three task forces to explore ways the three primary Conferences (Nebraska, South Dakota and Northern Plains) along with Iowa and Montana-Northern Wyoming could work together. The three task forces are to explore some possible opportunities for cooperation and we hope from this effort would come even more substantial opportunities. The three task forces are communication, financial management, and search and call. The task forces are currently being developed and any who would like to be part of this project are invited to contact the Conference Office.

Fund Raising Opportunities for Youth Activities

As summer approaches, we are aware of 3 great opportunities for the NPC youth and Families. 1st is the Regional Youth Event which will be in Billings, Montana from July 5 – 10th. RYE is open to all youth ages 13 – 18. The cost for RYE is \$450 per youth (including the bus). 2nd is the Summer Youth camp at Wesley Acres (ages 8 – 16), July 25 – 29. 3rd is the Church and Family Gathering at Valley City during the Annual Meeting (June 11 – 13).

There are also three ways congregations can help fund the attendance of youth from their membership or from the Conference at large. First, is to sell specially designed T- Shirts with the phrase "God Is Still Speaking: Oh Yeah You Bet' cha." These shirts sell for \$25 dollars which yielding \$10 each for the cause. Second, is to buy a stock option by paying \$150 to invest in the future of a NPC youth. Only 116 shares will be sold. All sponsors will receive a picture of the youth they are sponsoring and a letter from the youth they are sponsoring. Third, (and this is my personal favorite) is to host a "No Serve Dinner." This involves hosting a lutefisk dinner that will cost \$10 if the guests eat the lutefisk and \$25 if they do not.

All these ideas along with information about all the youth and family events and registration forms can be found on the NPCUCC web site www.npcucc.org under fliers and forms. If you have any questions, please contact the Conference Office (I701 255 1104) or Carl Borden (701 840 5104).

The Calendar for February 2010

Date	Time	Event	Location
2/2	1:30 pm (ct)	Stewardship Club	Jamestown
2/2	4:30 pm (ct)	NDHRC Development	Fargo
2/6-2/8	-----	CBCO	Cleveland
2/9	10:00 am (ct)	MV Cluster	Hebron
2/10	12:00 Noon	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
2/12	-----	Conference Committees	Bismarck
2/13	9:00 am (ct)	Conference Council	Bismarck
2/14	11:00 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	Independence/Mandaree
2/15	-----	Central Cluster	-----
2/17	-----	Minot Cluster	-----
2/18	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Fargo/First
2/19	10:00 am (ct)	Annual Meeting Planning	Valley City

2/22-2/27	-----	Annual Consultation	Tampa
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