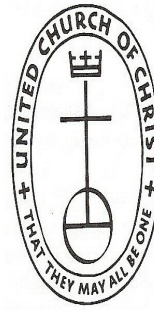


**NORTHERN PLAINS CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**A monthly newsletter supporting
the building of community in
the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic,
multi-lingual, multi-national
community of faith.**



**204 East Reno Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota
58504-6471**

**Office Phone: 701-255-1104
Fax Number: 701-255-0103**

**Website:
<http://npcucc.org>**



FEBRUARY 2012 Aware



As I Look At It:

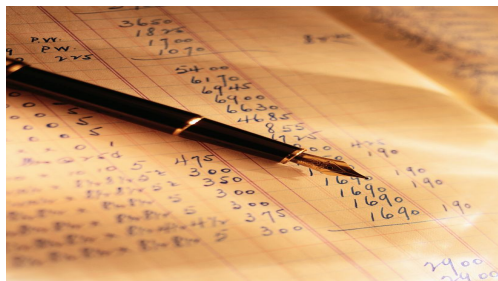
Between Christmas and New Year's Peg and I went to the Twin Cities, primarily to visit her brother, Jack. Since the hotel that we stayed in was near the Mall of America, we decided to go and see if some items we had been trying to find were there. After arriving at the Mall I was quickly reminded why I very seldom went there when we lived in St. Paul: "I DO NOT LIKE TO SHOP". Fortunately, Peg was a woman on a mission, so I found a "husbands chair", pulled out a book and began to read. It was not to long when another Refugee of the Mall sat down next to me. Noticing the message and the designs on the UCC cap I was wearing, he laid his hand on my shoulder and said, "So you are a Christian Aye"? He continued, "So am I, which makes us brothers." We share a belief that; ... What next flew out of his mouth was a series of hate filled statements about anyone who did not look like him, see life like him, come from the same place as he did or speak like him. It was apparent that very few walking past us were really his brothers and sisters. I found myself saying that I doubted that were we brothers of any kind and walked away.

The question that this brought up for me asks, "What does it mean to be Christian?" "What does it mean when we wear a Christian Symbol on our clothing or as a piece of jewelry?" What are we saying about ourselves and what are we saying about our view of those who share this Earthly Home with us? My Mall of America Brother had a clear view of what it meant to be a Christian. He welded the gavel of judgment with abandon. Now I understand that different people will interpret the Christian faith differently. While God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, life circumstances clearly give us different interpretations of what being a follower of God means. But I would clearly have to say that for me, if my words or actions do not square with the Gospel I better think it over. If my faith would allow me to deny the dignity of one of my brothers or sisters in the faith because of what God has given to them as a child of creation, things such as color, language, orientation and the like I am not standing on solid faith ground. It appears that while my Mall of America friend and I seemed to have the same faith we were not in reality following the same God. I believe that if we cannot love and respect the people that God has created, as

God has created them, then we cannot love and respect the God that calls life into being. I believe that our faith is a bridge that unites us and thereby enables us to see in one another the living presence of God's Holy Spirit. It is the means whereby we can appreciate the gifts of God present in another. Our faith is not a wall that separates us from those who see life differently from us.

All too often, we say in the name of the faith the fears we have of that which we do not understand. This is by its very nature a denial of the discipleship to which God is calling us. Let us not allow our fears to shape our faith but rather may our faith calm and overcome our fears. May we be able to sit together as brothers and sisters in the faith, embracing one another and welcoming all as part of an ever more diverse family.

Namaste
Wade



Year End financial Reports will be emailed to the congregations:

The end of January the year-end financial reports will be emailed to the congregations of the Northern Plains Conference. They are being emailed to the pastors of the congregations in the expectation that they will then be shared with the appropriate folk in the congregations. Please report any discrepancy between your records and ours to the Conference Office.



Let us join in the celebration of a service of installation for the United Ministry of Mayville;

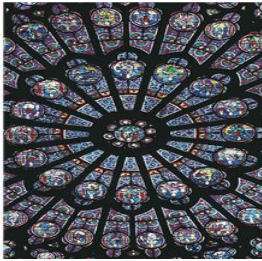
On Sunday, February 12th at 10:00 am (ct) there will be a service of installation for Jeffrey Macejkovic and Kristina Waters as the pastors for the Ecumenical parish, United Ministry of Mayville. This ministry will be made up of the Mayville United Church of Christ and Mayville Lutheran church congregations. Let us join together and celebrate this exciting community ministry.



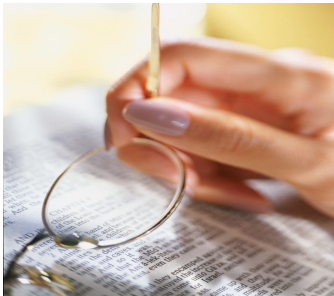
News from Lindy Holt, Disaster Ministries Coordinator.

While we have been truly blessed with a mild winter, before long spring will be around the corner. Let's hope and pray that we have a mild spring and flood season. That said it is time to think about how you and your church can help those whose homes were flooded, damaged, or destroyed in the Minot area last year. The United Church of Christ is partnering with our ecumenical brothers and sisters to work together for long term recovery. Hope Village is being developed as a place to coordinate volunteers and the plans are to be fully functioning by April 15th. Volunteers will come from all over the country.

We will soon be listed on the United Church of Christ National Website as a place to register your group to come and help with the much needed work. The Minot UCC is able and willing to house groups that want to come and the registration will take place through the national website at <http://www.ucc.org/volunteer/groups.html>. Please do not contact them directly. Call me if you have questions at 1-701-430-0727 or ethelindholt@gmail.com. Now is the time to talk and plan with your church family and friends. The families in the Minot area need our help. . . so let's respond.



Congregations Seeking a pastor:
Plymouth Congregational UCC, Fargo
Bismarck-Mandan UCC, Bismarck.



ALWL Gatherings to Begin:
Each year many of the Northern Plains Conference Congregations are guided in worship by Authorized Lay Worship Leaders (ALWL) who have gone through the Conference Program and are enabled to lead worship when the resident pastor is gone for personal or professional reasons.

The team of ALWL's brings continuity to the life of many congregations every year. Anyone interested in becoming an ALWL leader is invited to contact the Conference Office. If a pastor or lay leader believes that someone in their congregation would have the gifts to serve as part of this vital group, please let the Conference Office know and we will make the contact for you. Following the initial contact the interested individual becomes part of an ALWL training group. This group will meet 4 or 5 times for the purpose of gaining experience in the development and presentation of worship services, coming to a greater understanding of what comprises a meaningful worship service, and gaining confidence in being in front of people. These meetings will take place at a location central to the participants and at a time that is convenient for all.

Therefore, if you are interested in becoming an ALWL or you know someone who would be interested, please contact the Conference Office as soon as possible. You can also download from the Northern Plains Conference Web Site www.npcucc.org the ALWL and Licensed Nomination Form (found under resources) and send it on to the Conference Office.

Any who would have questions about this program are invited to contact the Conference Office.



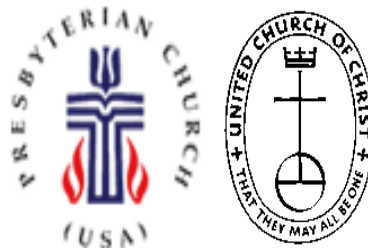
Kate Huey to present Stewardship Program Via WebEx:
Kate Huey, Minister for Covenantal Stewardship of the National Church will be guiding us in a Stewardship Workshop Feb.

7, 2012 beginning at 7:00 pm (ct). The workshop will be presented on WebEx and all who are interested in participating are invited to let the Conference Office know in advance so that a link can be sent to your computer.

If any would like to participate but are not sure how WebEx works, please contact the Conference Office and we can set up a training time that fits your busy schedule. Kate Huey is a dedicated member of the National Staff who brings significant experience and dedication to her work as a stewardship guide for congregations. All who are interested are encouraged to participate. If you have lay leaders who would like to get involved, please do not hesitate to invite them to become a part of this on-line event.



Many Continue to Respond to the "Friends of the Conference" Letter:
Just prior to Christmas, a letter went out to members of the Northern Plains Conference asking for their support. This letter sought support for the ongoing general ministry of the Northern Plains Conference. We want to thank all who have given so generously and feel that this offering might truly be a celebration of our life together. If you have questions about this offering and would like to talk to someone about it please call or email the Conference Office.



Media Resource News
January 2012

Do you have your Lenten resources ready? Ash Wednesday (2/22/12) will be here before you know it! So it's time to check out resources from the Media Resource Center.

Maybe you'd like a seven week study exploring themes such as: What are you living for? What has God called you to become? How is God calling you to compassion? Try **The Jesus Creed** DVD & study guide (**AD#50**) on loving God & loving others.

Or perhaps your focus will be about becoming a better (steward) caretaker of the earth. **Renewal (#AD61)** is a 90 minute documentary on environmental sustainability which can be viewed in eight or nine segments followed by discussion.

For individuals desiring a Lenten devotional guide, Presbyterian's Today offers **A Lenten Pilgrimage** by Ruth Huizenga Everhart available online @store.pcusa.org/1211611012, or by phone (800) 524-2612, request PDS# 12116-11-012. Booklets are \$4 with discounts when ordering more than one copy. The author's invitation: "I came to realize that being a pilgrim is not about traveling to a particular place, as much as immersing oneself in the Spirit filled past so it can infuse our present. As the old hymns say, we're all pilgrims on a journey. Won't you become a pilgrim this Lent? Come with me to the Holy Land."

Please check our website to see what might work for your group this year: www.plainsmedia.org.

Media Resource Center
Carmen Gill, Administrator
mrc@sodakucc.org



The opportunity to meet a fellow teenager from every state in the United States; playing volleyball with kids from California; learning to hula dance with teens from the Hawaiian Islands; open-mike it with New Yorkers; rocking to loud music with Tennessee teens; college campus; dorm rooms, midnight pizza runs . . . Interested??!! Then the UCC National Youth Event is the place for you to be July 10-13, 2012 at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

Special guest speakers will be Dr. Marcia McFee who preaches and leads worship with music, theater, and dance. MK Asante will also be present; author, filmmaker, and master storyteller. There will be a wide variety of music . . . praise and worship from the Tribe of Judah; jazz from an all-teen group Gospel for Teens; rap and pop from JK West, and hip hop and soul from RhemaSoul.

Daytime activities will include service projects in the community, workshops where your gadgets are welcome; discussions, and recreation. Evenings will include concerts and dances, games and karaoke. You may not want to,

but at some point you do need to get some sleep. Oh, and did I mention lots of free stuff.

Grow in your faith and make new friendships in a fun and meaningful way. Get the scoop by going to the website: ucc.org/youth/nye. We will be traveling to NYE as a group from our Conference. Travel arrangements are still pending as we need to know how many youth are attending. Youth leaders and pastors need to get a "head count" into the Conference Office soon, so plans can be finalized.

By the way, NYE is \$425 so youth groups should be having fun fundraising right now in preparation for the big event!

--submitted by Rev. Tammy Toepke-Floyd, Chairperson for NYE for the Northern Plains Conference and pastor at the United Church of Christ, Wishek, North Dakota.

One Church, Four Days To Imagine. More than 2,000 Stillspeaking Youth Welcome to National Youth Event 2012! NYE will be filled with inspiring youth just like you eager to be in community where they can engage social and human justice and a sacred and safe space to encounter God. Imagine that! National Youth Event is a place for youth to come and learn and experience spiritual and leadership formation. Your NYE Youth Vision Team selected Isaiah 43: 19 as your spiritual mantra for NYE 2012. Imagine the new thing God is doing through and with the Stillspeaking Youth of the United Church of Christ, right now. Go ahead. Dare to Imagine!

**Celebrate Seminary Sunday ~
February 26**

Please plan to lift up theological education and the UCC Seminaries during worship on February 26 (or any Sunday that fits the worship schedule for your congregation). Liturgical resources are available on the CUE (Chicago, United, Eden) Seminaries

Website: www.cueseminaries.org. If you would like worship bulletins, offering envelopes, or a 5-minute DVD about Chicago, United, and Eden Seminaries that can be shown during worship, please contact CUE Seminaries Director, Kiely Todd Roska, kiely@cueseminaries.org or (651) 255-6121.

The Conference Calendar for February

Date	Time	Event	Location
2/2	9:00 am (ct)	Conference Call Strategic Planning for NDCC	-----
2/7	7:00 pm (ct)	Stewardship Gathering with Kate Huey	WebEx
2/9	10:00 am (ct)	MV Cluster	Bismarck UCC
2/10	10:00 am (ct)	Midwest Seminary Conference Call	-----
2/12	10:00 am (ct)	Installation service	Mayville
2/15	12:00 Noon	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
2/16	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Moorhead
2/18-2/21	-----	Council for Theological Education	Cleveland
2/22	-----	Ash Wednesday	-----
2/23	11:00 am (ct)	Minot Cluster	-----
2/26	11:30 am (ct)	CM attends worship Seminary Sunday	Twin Buttes
2/27	11:00 am (ct)	Central Cluster	-----