

**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.**

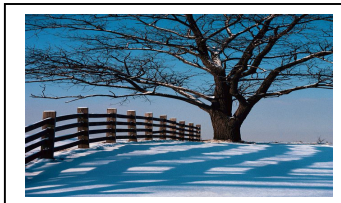


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## **January 2012 Aware**



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

As I, along with you stand on the cusp of another year, I share with you the following prayer, in which I ask God to guide us on our journey into the promised land of 2012. I pray not that the journey be easy, but rather that in the very presence of God's Holy Spirit we be faithful. May our way along the uncertain and often dark ways of 2012 be lighted by the star that shown over Bethlehem and may our Mind's Ear carry the joyous message of the angels as they announced to all the world for all time, the birth of the Christ Child. We would pray that 2012 may truly be a "Year Of The Lord".

I begin this prayer with gratitude for the many blessings with which You so freely embrace us. May the coming year be lived in gratitude for the love which You have declared through Jesus the Christ, a love manifested in the promises of Your Spirit and the renewing touch of Your forgiveness. O God we live in gratitude for the light of hope that you enable within us, as we live in the fullness of your grace.

Dear God we live in a world that is anything but peaceful. There are wars and rumors of war. Your children, dear God, in many lands, are suffering at the hands of one another. Please O God open

doors of understanding that will move us beyond the fears that lead to violence. Help us to get past the history that holds so much misunderstanding and the dogma that is so divisive. O God, we pray that You would silence the guns and bring Your people to the tables where new visions can be found.

Blessed Redeeming God, as we are part of Your family in our Spiritual bond there are children that cry for hunger, and others that freeze in the cold. Empower us, I pray, to become channels of Your healing hope and your endless promise. O God, I pray that You would so move us that the hungry would have food, the cold would have shelter and the lonely would find a friend. May we be the channels of Your grace that 2012 might be the year when the strength of hope replaces the cancer of despair.

Dear God, I pray that in 2012 we live out our love for You be caring for the life giving, life renewing home we have on this land we call Earth. May we be respectful of its many blessings, so caring for them that we pass on to future generations a land as vital and fresh as we received from those who have gone before us. Let us so change the way we live that the patterns of climate and temperature which You have called into

being are not altered by our actions. Let us conserve and respect the precious gifts of water, land and air that the quality of life which You envisioned can be the gift our children and grand children and those beyond receive.

We pray, O God, for the folk of North Dakota as they are seeking ways to recover from the devastating flooding of 2011. May they find homes that are warm and secure and may their spirits find rest. We pray, O God for those that would come to help with the recovery. May they experience their efforts being rewarded by the gratitude of those whom they help. Dear God, I would pray that the "Still Speaking God" would continue to speak to all who stand in their moment of crisis. May Your divine and Holy Spirit bring a strength of conviction and a bond of unity that enables those who are challenged to find a new way forward and those that are spared the ravages, an inspiration to reach out and help another.

Finally I pray for the lay and pastoral leadership of the congregations of this Conference. May Your holy wisdom be coupled to Your divine grace, and thereby be shared freely, bringing to all the wonder of new creation. We pray, O God that Your Spirit will light fires of hope and promise within Your congregations that might illuminate the way forward for 2012.

O God, receive I ask, this prayer in the name of Jesus the Christ. AMEN



**Wishing Darcy, Carleton, Theodore and George Borden well:**

We thank Carleton and Darcy for their ministry in the Northern Plains Conference. They have served as pastors for our church in Valley City and

Argusville (Darcy also served as interim at St. John in Hebron and the Jamestown and Medina parish), and also as the co youth directors for the Conference. We wish them well as they make a move to Pennsylvania and to the historic Falkner Swamp Congregation. May God's blessed Spirit be with them as they journey East and as they embrace their new ministry.



**We welcome David Hartson as the pastor for the Valley City Congregation:**

David Hartson is joining the Northern Plains Conference pastoral team as the part time licensed pastor for the Valley City Congregation. We welcome David and look forward to future opportunities to work with him in the ministry of the Northern Plains Conference. David will begin January 1, 2012 and an installation service is being planned for January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

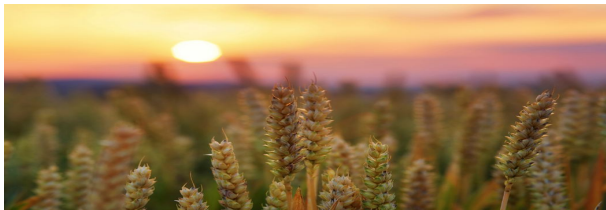
**Friends of the Conference offering invitations have gone out:**

A number of Northern Plains folk have received an invitation to share in the End of the Year Friends of the Conference drive. This vital drive is an opportunity to help the Northern Plains Conference meet its financial challenges for the 2011. Any who did not receive the invitation but would like to join in the Friends of the Conference Offering are invited to contact the Conference Office.

**A new round of ALWL classes to begin early in 2012:**

Soon in 2012 we will be starting another four class series of ALWL classes. This four class series is the entry point for all who would like to become an Authorized

Lay Worship Leader for the Northern Plains Conference (pulpit supply). The classes have generally been held on Saturday on a date that is convenient for the participants. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this vital ministry please call the Conference Office or fill out and send in the Licensed Ministry, Authorized Lay Worship Leader Prospect form which you will find under resources on the Northern Plains Conference Web Site [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org).



### **Voices From The Prairie:**

*These are the best of times and the worst of times.* I have heard these words or similar words many times these past months from families flooded by the Mouse River this past June. The depth and breath of the loss has yet to be fully understood by those not here and that is even true for some folks here. Common to all major disasters is a delayed awareness of the scope of the loss. Reminders of the depth of the loss only come when one has a need for a particular item such as a passport, then one is reminded of one more piece that is missing. Minot and its people need your prayers. We have so very far to go in spite of all the hard work that has been done. Those who are elderly and disabled or poor for other reasons, face the likelihood of being out of their homes for at least another year because they do not have the resources to repair them without volunteer labor. I have spoken publicly about the worry of severe

depression setting in, especially at this time of year. Families want to have some sort of Christmas yet when you are living with another family neither will have the Christmas they are use to or desire. Yet in spite of all the loss, in spite of the entire heart ache, in spite of all the price gouging, in spite of a shortage of workers this is also *the best of times*.

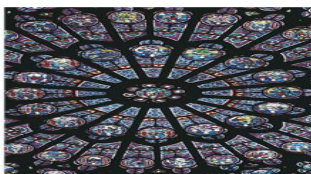
I have heard from more than once from individuals who long ago left church behind; that all the church volunteers from around the country was causing them to reconsider. Perhaps the reputation of the church and the *Body of Christ* is being rehabbed one volunteer at a time. The witness of Christian love by neighbor helping neighbor, family helping family and many allowing strangers to live with them, is occurring daily. We had over 4000 homes uninhabitable by the flood yet only less than 400 were taken into the shelters. The rest lived with neighbor, friend or family, and most are still there. FEMA continues to be a blessing in spite of what you hear in the news.

*It is the best of times* in so far as people are discovering that the importance of things is much less than they previously thought. No one asks how many square feet you lost. No one asks if your furniture came from Ethan Allan or was hand me downs. Often words are not necessary, just lingering hugs and shared tears. Not much fits in a FEMA trailer but people are making it home for now because they have rediscovered that faith, family, friends and neighbors are the core of a good life.

*It is the best of times* for the Body of Christ is revealed daily, it is seen in all the brokenness in the city and in individual lives and it is seen in the healing that comes from one act of kindness and love after another. God's grace is revealed through his servants and each swing of the "Hammer Rings Hope."

One of our church families was in Europe when the flood came so they lost everything including a precious piano. One of our other members took wood from their floor and from the piano and made them a beautiful chalice. It will be on our communion table for our Christmas Eve service when we celebrate the birth of our Lord, as we do so, we will be reminded that with it comes the knowledge that there is one who understands homelessness, one who understands brokenness and someone who can bind up our wounds. *It is the best of times!*

*Written by Frank Picard, minister at Minot and Granville.*



Northern Plains Conference  
 Congregations Seeking a pastor:  
 Zion UCC in Medina  
 First Cong. in Jamestown  
 Plymouth Cong. in Fargo  
 Bismarck UCC, in Bismarck



**Kate Huey of the National Church will be hosting a special WebEx Stewardship:** gathering on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 7:00 pm (ct). All lay and pastoral leaders that would like to participate are invited to let the Conference Office know so that a link can be sent to the proper computer. Please watch for more information about this interesting opportunity to explore one of the most vital subjects for the modern church with one of the most well versed leaders. If you have questions do not hesitate to contact the Conference Office.



***Imagine!:***

The [Still Speaking Youth](#) of the United Church of Christ (UCC) are energized as we gear up for [National Youth Event 2012 \(NYE\)](#). NYE is the largest UCC gathering of youth from across the United States and the globe! Did you know NYE will host youth from Asia, Africa, Europe and South America thanks to the [UCC's Global Ministries](#) partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)? NYE is a quadrennial event and next summer, it will convene at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, July 10-13, 2012. If you haven't guessed already, the theme is *Imagine*, inspired by [Isaiah 43:19](#) and chosen by the 2012 NYE Youth Vision Team. Our youth vision team members selected this main theme to challenge their peers and the wider church to imagine the possibilities of:

*Extravagant Welcome,  
 A Healthy World,  
 A World Where Differences Are Embraced,  
 and One Church!*

These four sub-themes will be reflective guides for the four days at NYE next summer and will be the inspiration behind exuberant worship and plenary sessions; interactive and inspiring workshops; community service projects and alternative after-hours activities that invite youth to continue the work of justice, faith, leadership and community formation after evening worship. Youth have shared, "Don't think we all want to go play video games or go to the food court to hang out. We want to keep doing the work!" Alternative after-hours activities provide a space for youth groups to do just that through forums, film screenings, evening prayer and meditation, trainings for adult group leaders and even an outdoor Youth Gospel Rock concert.

Youth also expressed an interest in engaging justice and faith through community service. A limited number of service projects will be available as an alternative to workshops in partnership with United Way of West Lafayette, Indiana. Everyone can support the [NYE Literacy Labyrinth](#), the official NYE Justice, Faith and Service Outreach. The outreach will focus on literacy and accessibility to books for youth and children. Every registrant is asked to pack a book to give a book at NYE. That's potentially 3,000 books we can donate in support of group homes, libraries, community centers, public schools and non-profit agencies in the West Lafayette community! Imagine that!

Imagine all of the great possibilities awaiting us at NYE! Stay connected with updates for speakers, workshops, service projects, performing artists, after-hours activities and more via the NYE [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)! Our hash tag is NYE2012. Be sure to tag us when you post and tweet! Help us

spread the word and send an invitation to others by sharing [this link](#) and these welcome videos from UCC General Minister and President the Rev. [Geoffrey Black](#) and the [NYE Vision Team](#).

Registration is open now through Monday, May 21, 2012. [Register today!](#) Get ready to imagine and let's remain in touch. We want to learn about the creative ways you are fundraising and mapping out your trip to NYE. Email [youth@ucc.org](mailto:youth@ucc.org) with your group's "Getting to NYE" story and we may profile your youth group on [KYeP](#).

### **Daring to Imagine!**

[Waltrina N. Middleton](#), Minister for Youth Advocacy and Leadership Formation. From the December 1, 2011 UCC Congregational Vitality News.

### **The Conference seeks your help planning for the National Youth Event.**

One of the most meaningful experiences a UCC youth can have is to attend the National Youth Event. This is an opportunity for young people from across the nation to come together, experience outstanding speakers, share in meaningful age appropriate worship and make new friends. It is a time for spirits to soar and visions to expand. As we begin to make plans to attend the 2012 National Youth Event July `10 – 13 we are asking for the help of the pastors and lay leaders of the Northern Plains Conference. Would you please take a moment and assess how many you believe will be coming from your congregation. This will help us when it comes to making plans for the trip and also lining up adequate and safe transportation. We are not asking for any kind of a guarantee but rather an educated guess as to what kind of participation we will be having. Please take a bit of time to check who you believe will be coming to the special time

and then email your responses to the Conference Office.

**The NPC Conference Calendar for January**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
1/1	-----	Happy New Year	-----
1/5	10:00 am (ct)	Special SDC/NPC Task Force	WebEx
1/8	10:30 am (ct)	CM attends worship	Valley City
1/8	3:00 pm (ct)	Installation Service	Valley City
1/12	-----	MV Cluster	-----
1/15	11:00 am (ct)	CM attends worship and Annual meeting	Carrington
1/16	10:00 am (ct)	NDCC Board	Jamestown
1/17	12:00 Noon (ct)	Annual Meeting Planning	Aberdeen
1/18	12:00 Noon (ct)	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
1/20	-----	Fargo Cluster	-----
1/22	10:30 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	Hillsboro
1/26	11:00 am (ct)	Minot Cluster	-----
1/27	11:00 am (ct)	Central Cluster	-----
1/27	-----	Conference Committees	WebEx
1/28	9:00 am (ct)	Conference Council	WebEx
1/29	11:30 am (ct)	CM attends worship	Parshall/Memorial
1/30	4:00 pm (ct)	SDC/NPC conversation	Watertown
1/31	9:00 am (ct)	SDC/NPC Task Force	Watertown