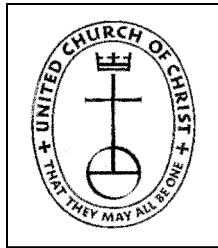


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AWARE
A Monthly newsletter
supporting the building of community
in the NPCUCC
a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual,
multi-national community of faith
March 2009

As I Look At It:

We live in a nation that has blessedly written into its Constitution the basic premise that there is a separation between church and state. This, however, begs the question of the role of our faith in relation to the state, federal and local governments. Is there a way we can live our faith in the political environment? I would like to reflect upon this question in the hope that it will start a meaningful discussion with NPCUCC folk.

To begin with, I need to clarify my understanding of what the “separation of Church and State” really means. It is not my understanding that our founders expected these two vital areas of our life to be in isolation from each other. WE are not meant to live bi-polar lives, partially in the religious sphere and partially in the political sphere. I do not believe that we are meant to choose between the two, being either religious people or political people. I believe that our founders wisely understood that a strong nation was one in which each area informed but did not dictate to the other. The government would not have a state religion, and religious beliefs would not dictate public policy. This means that as a person of faith, who holds some views very dearly, I must realize that my views will not become public policy unless they are enacted by a political process. For while I am allowed to hold my views, I am not allowed to apply them to the lives of others. This means that our religious views must follow through the political process to affect the lives of those outside our faith community.

I do believe that there are some basic views of our faith that are so timely and so substantive that we as people of faith are called to support them in such a manner that they can become part of our public policy. I would like to highlight just one such view. I find it impossible to read any substantial section of scripture without discovering God’s passion that all people be treated justly by government, neighbors, communities and institutions. I believe that God’s view of justice is a theme that brings unity to the lives of diverse people, who come from different cultures, live different life styles at different times in the history of the Bible. Justice is one of the unifying themes that calls the Bible into unity,

This passion for justice says to our Federal and State governments that citizens who have not been convicted of a crime have every reason to expect their civil rights to be affirmed and protected regardless of gender, creed, culture, orientation or race. The faith we affirm declares that their homes, jobs and personal dignity are not subject to the whims, biases and fickle reactions of those who either do not understand the realities of another, or will not recognize the fullness of God’s accepting love. Civil rights are the social mandate and our faith declares that God’s vision of justice for all does not tolerate the denial of those civil rights because some of us do not recognize the path another must travel. Ignorance of another’s place in life is not an excuse for abuse.

I further believe that God’s passion for justice would declare that all children deserve a healthy start to life regardless of the financial or social standing of the parents. God does not give the gift of life to some with the added blessing of health care, while others are to spend their life struggling to overcome the emotional, mental and physical liabilities that stem from unchecked childhood disease and neglect.

As people of faith, we have a vision of justice to share, a hope to proclaim and a joy to celebrate. May we do so not only in our sanctuaries but in our halls of justice.

***Grace and Peace
Wade***

Register Now For The Post Lenten Retreat

All NPCUCC pastors (licensed and ordained), and ALWLs are invited to make plans to share in the post Lenten Retreat April 26 – 28 at Maryvale, 11550 River Road, near Valley City. The presenter for this gathering will be Luther Snow, author of “The Organization of Hope” and the “Power of Asset Mapping.” He will be with us beginning on Sunday Evening and continuing through Tuesday morning. On Monday, CHARIS participants will join us. Luther Snow will guide us in a search for means and methods of revitalization and renewal within our congregations, helping us focus on the gifts that we have within each congregation rather than simply the problems. The cost for lodging and meals will be \$70 per person with scholarships available. Please check the NPCUCC web site www.npcucc.org/fliers or [form](#) for more information. If you have questions please do not hesitate to contact the Conference Office.

Make Plans To Attend The 2009 Annual Meeting

“THE JOY OF BEING BOLD DISCIPLES” is the theme for the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ. The Congregational United Church of Christ of Minot will host our gathering. You are invited to join us as we gather for fellowship, sharing, celebration, food and yes business. The presenters for this gathering will be Dr. David Greenhaw, president of Eden Theological Seminary, Charlene J. Smith of the National Church and Jim and Jayanthi Wilson, missionaries to Botswana. The Annual Meeting will begin with registration starting at 3:00 pm on June 5 with an opening dinner at 5:30 pm (ct) and will conclude following lunch on Sunday June 7th. Please check the NPCUCC web site www.npcucc.org/flier for more information. Registration forms and pricing will be available shortly. If you have questions please call the Conference Office.

Congregations Seeking a Pastor:

The United Church of Christ of Wahpeton is in the process of seeking pastoral leadership

The One Great Hour Of Sharing Offering Is On March 22 This Year

“Where is your Treasure” is the theme for the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering on March 22, the 4th Sunday in Lent this year. Through this offering, each of us has the opportunity to proclaim God’s loving presence through ministries of healing and hope. Each congregation should have received the One Great Hour of Sharing materials. Please look them over and prepare to receive this vital offering, responding to disasters at home and abroad.

Stewardship and Financial Development Task Forces Invite You To Share In The Regional Covenant Gatherings

The Stewardship and Financial Development Task forces have joined forces to present through the Covenant Gathering network the opportunity to share in a special workshop focusing on the development of a four faceted approach to congregational stewardship with a special emphasis on congregational wills development. The Covenant Gatherings will be held at the following dates, locations and times: 3/3 at Medina starting at 6:00 pm (ct); 3/5 at Ebenezer outside of Elgin starting at 6:00 pm (mt); 3/9 at First Congregational, Hebron starting at 6:00 pm (ct); 3/10, Hillsboro, starting at 7:00 pm (ct); 3/12, New Town, starting at 6:00 pm (ct); and 3/16, Garrison, starting at 6:00 pm (ct). You are invited to make plans to join your neighbors and friends in these informal gatherings. If you have questions please do not hesitate to call NPCUCC.

Medallion Award Nomination Forms on the Web Site

Each year at the Northern Plains Conference Annual Meeting the Church and Ministry Committee presents the “Medallion Award” to special lay and pastoral members. You are invited to check out the NPCUCC web site <http://www.npcucc.org/html/forms.php>. Click on Medallion Award for 2009 Background Information to see the criteria for receiving the medallion award. Then click on The 2009 Medallion Award Nomination form to nominate the person of your choice. Each year at the Annual Meeting up to three NPCUCC members receive this prized recognition. Help us by nominating the worthy person of your congregation.

Nominations Are Open For NPCUCC POSITIONS

If you or someone you know would be interested and qualified to be on one of the standing committees of the Northern Plains Conference (church and ministry, faith and nurture, mission and outreach) or the Conference Executive positions of secretary or treasurer) please fill out the nomination form found on the NPCUCC web site <http://www.npcucc.org/html/forms.php> and send it into the Conference Office. If you have questions about the job descriptions for the various positions please check the bylaws that are also found on the web site.

There May Be Grant Money for Your Congregation’s Project!

Money may be available for worthy projects by churches. For the information needed please see “What Enquiring Funders Want to Know,” on the Northern Plains Conference Website (<http://www.npcucc.org/html/grants.php>). NPCUCC Grant Request Writer, R. J. Stohler, will be glad to explore with you possible funding for your project. You may contact him at 1537 48th St. S. #108, Fargo, ND 58103, rjstohler@msn.com, or 701-282-6584, or through the Conference Office.

Monthly Stewardship Messages Are Available

At the UCC website www.ucc.org if you click on “church stuff” and then “stewardship” on the drop down menu and then to “stewardship messages” you will find very helpful and well written stewardship messages for each month. I invite you to check them out. I think you will find them very helpful in your congregations. The direct path to the messages is <http://www.ucc.org/stewardship/stewardship-messages/>

THE CALENDAR FOR MARCH:

Date	Time	Event	Location
3/1	9:00 am/ 11:00 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	Granville/Minot
3/2	7:00 pm (ct)	Annual Meeting Planning	Minot
3/3	6:00 pm (ct)	Covenant Gathering	New Salem
3/5	6:00 pm (mt)	Covenant Gathering	Elgin
3/7	11:00 am (ct)	ALWL #1	-----
3/8	9:30 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	Wishek
3/9	6:00 pm (ct)	Covenant Gathering	Hebron/First
3/10	10:00 am (mt)	MV Cluster	Dickinson
3/10	7:00 pm (ct)	Covenant Gathering	Hillsboro
3/12	12:00 Noon (ct)	NDHRC Development Committee	Fargo
3/12	6:00 pm (ct)	Covenant Gathering	New Town
3/15	11:00 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	Twin Buttes
3/16	6:00 pm (ct)	Covenant Gathering	Garrison
3/18	1:00 pm (ct)	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
3/19	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Plymouth, Fargo
3/21	-----	CHYS Spring Fling	Bismarck
3/25	11:00 am (ct)	*Minot Cluster	-----
3/25	4:30 pm (ct)	NDHRC Board	Fargo
3/27	11:00 am (ct)	*Central Cluster	-----
3/29-31	5:00 pm (ct)	West Central Regional	Des Moines, Iowa

* Cluster has not met for February and dates and times are tentative