

The Northern Plains Conference

United Church of Christ
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AWARE FOR NOVEMBER 2010

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

As I Look At It:

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke." Isaiah 58:6

The question that faces parents, pastors, teachers and members of the community is "what do you do when you see bullying?" "What is to be our response when we know that bullying is happening?" In response to an "Anti-Bullying Initiative" submitted by Rev. Dorothy Borden, Pastor from Argusville, a discussion was held by the Mission and Outreach Committee of the Northern Plains Conference and another by the Conference Council on this question. The decision was made that bullying will be the focus of a Pastoral Letter to be sent by the Conference Minister. In this brief article, I am trying to introduce the subject that we together might seek God's wisdom through prayer. For the purpose of this article let us accept the definition that "Bullying takes place when one or more persons, generally children or adolescents, abuse another over a period of time and with some intensity. Such bullying may be physical or verbal and can often cause isolation. Bullying is hurtful, intentional, often repeated words, acts or other behavior.

The recent unfortunate and lamentable suicides draw attention to a deep seated problem that faces us today. The growing intolerance on the part of so many of those that stand out in the play ground, the class room, the community or anywhere else has manifested itself in acts of unspeakable abuse that have tragic consequences. Statistics tell us that one in five of our children are bullied. The level of abuse rises to nine out of ten if one looks only at the LGBT community. To draw upon the wisdom of Isaiah "It is time that we undo the thongs of hatred that have so long bound us and let those we see as different go free".

The common wisdom of our parent's generation and ours is to "Let the Children work it out". With these words, we like Pilate, wash our hands of the evil that is taking place and leave the victims to fend for themselves. The challenge that lies before us is to enable the oppressed and the victims, to break the yoke and step forward into their future with hope. We need to engage our churches, our communities, our governments and our schools in confronting this cancer that eats away at the very fiber of our culture. I look forward to future dialogue and discernment as together; we "Undo the Thongs of the Yoke and Let the Oppressed Go Free".

Namaste

Wade

VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE:

I am grateful for being the first among our Northern Plains Conference UCC leaders to pair my reflections with those of our Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Wade Schemmel. Indeed, just as the church is never "all about the pastor," likewise the Conference is never "all about the Conference Minister." **We are a team** of clergy and lay, a team comprised of rural and urban, Native American and Euro American and African American and Asian American and all the other ethnic mixes, "liberal" and "conservative," LGBT and "straight," E & R background and Congregational and simply "UCC" (post-1957), born into the UCC or one of its predecessor denominations and born into other denominations or faith traditions or brand new in an active spiritual life, "born again" and "born right the first time." Having been privileged to participate in **our Conference's wondrously diverse mix** now for four and a half years, I continue to be thankful for the ways

God works so creatively on the prairie and plains as we seek to be the presence of Christ and to live out **a vision of church in which all are welcome, just as our "Boss" not only has proclaimed, but also has lived out** in eating with and welcoming all the "wrong kinds of people"... even to the chagrin of the religious leadership of his day.

And there is so much for which to be thankful, as we approach another Thanksgiving Holiday. As we celebrate the civic holiday this year, I invite us all **to weave an attitude of thanksgiving into our daily lives**, focusing on blessings rather than burdens, celebrating possibilities rather than obstacles, remembering that **"with God all things are possible."** (Mt. 19:26) And we might well reflect on the very first Thanksgiving as a lasting challenge to come together across racial and ethnic lines, to remember our common humanity, and to add our voices to **the larger**

chorus of all kinds of people yearning and laboring toward God's vision of the day when **"they shall beat their swords into plowshares**, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

(Isaiah 2:4)

Blessings, Rev. Dr. Kevin Cassiday-Maloney, Pastor,
First Congregational UCC, Fargo

**CONFERENCE FINANCIAL BOOKS TO CLOSE
12/31/2010:**

The Conference financial books for 2010 will be closing on December 31, 2010. The computer program that is being used makes it impossible to record any offerings received in 2011 for 2010. Offerings received January 1 of 2011 will be recorded for 2011. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to give the Conference Office a call.

INTRODUCING VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE:

You may have noticed something new this month in the AWARE. That is a new article by Kevin Cassiday Maloney under the heading "Voices from the Prairie." I want to thank Kevin for his informative and heartfelt article, and also for being the first to join us in making the AWARE informative and meaningful and relevant. Under the heading "Voices from the Prairie" pastor and lay leaders from across the Northern Plains Conference and occasionally beyond will share with us their thoughts on relevant and timely concerns. I look forward to seeing what these voices have to say in the coming months.

**MULTIPLE PATHS HOLDS ITS FIRST CLASS
WITH FACULTY FROM UTS:**

September 24 and 25 students and mentors in the NPC Multiple Paths program joined with three faculty from Untied Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities at the Congregational United Church of Christ of Valley City to explore the first of eight gatherings under the heading of Pastoral Formation. These gatherings are not a replacement for other more focused classes that deal with Biblical, theological or historical aspects of ministry. These classes are a supplement that focus on the formation of persons coming into ministry that they might fully be ready to

THE CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER:

Date	Time	Event	Location
11/2-11/3	-----	Council for Theological Education(CTA)	Atlanta
11/4	5:00 pm (ct)	Annual Meeting Planning	Fargo/First
11/10	-----	AWARE Articles Due	-----
11/11	11:00 am(ct)	Minot Cluster	-----
11/16	6:00 pm (ct)	WebEx Workshop "Shaping Prairie Hospitality"	-----
11/18-11/21	-----	Congregationally Based Community Org. (CBCO)	Chicago
11/18	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Fargo
11/22	11:00 am (ct)	Central Cluster	Jamestown
11/25	-----	Thanksgiving	-----
11/29	10:00 am (ct)	MV Cluster	-----
11/30	12:00 Noon (ct)	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town

answer their calling. I want to thank Rev. Dr. Barbara Ann Keeley, Rev. Martha Postlethwaite and Rev. Trish Greeves for making the trip to Valley City and for sharing a most informative and meaningful weekend with us. Future gatherings will take place throughout 2010, 2011 and into 2012.

MEDIA RESOURCE CENTER NEWS:

The Media Resource Center (MRC) is a resource that is available to all the congregations of the NPC. Current and historic resources can be found that are helpful for groups, confirmation classes, youth activities and many other ministries within our churches. For more information, a full listing of materials can be found on the MRC web site www.plainsmedia.org or by calling 605 334 2802 or by emailing mrc@sodakucc.org. The Fall membership letters will soon be coming in the mail and will remind churches that the cost to be a member congregation is nominal. Annual fees range from \$10 for churches with membership of 100 or less to \$40 for churches with membership of over 850. Fees for churches of denominations other than UCC/PC are slightly higher.

**WEBEX WORKSHOP FOR SHAPING PRAIRIE
HOSPITALITY:**

The WebEx gathering for Shaping Prairie Hospitality with Charlene J. Smith will take place November 16th at 6:00 pm (ct). The gathering will be open to all congregations that attended the September 10 and 11 workshop in Jamestown. Information about participating in the workshop will be sent out prior to the WebEx gathering. Any congregation that did not attend the workshop in Jamestown but would like to get involved in the WebEx gatherings are invited to contact the Conference Office for a copy of the power point presentation which was the basis of the workshop. The dates for the other WebEx workshops are: Feb. 10, 2011, March 10, 2011 and April 14, 2011. There will be a closing face to face workshop on May 20 and 21, 2011.

**NORTHERN PLAINS CONGREGATIONS
SEEKING A PASTOR:**

Plymouth Fargo (Currently with a hold on profiles),
New Horizon Parish, Mayville Congregational United Church of Christ.