To see North Central Iowa’s calendar of events, please click here.

To see Prospect Hill’s calendar of events, please click here.

Daylight Saving Time begins on March 8. Don’t forget to turn your clocks ahead one hour!

Session Records Reviews

Prospect Hill’s Session Records Reviews will be held in the fall this year. The locations are yet to be determined, but the dates will be:

- September 12
- September 19
- September 26

North Central Iowa’s Session Records Reviews will also be held in the fall. The dates and locations are yet to be determined.

When more information is available, an email will be sent to the Clerks of Session of each respective Presbytery and the information will be set out in the Presbytery Connection.
Prayers of the Presbytery of North Central Iowa

Week of March 8  United Presbyterian Church, Traer – Rev. Brice Hoyt
Week of March 15  First Presbyterian Church, Conrad – Rev. Kerry Carson
Week of March 22  First Presbyterian Church, Jesup – Rev. John White
Week of March 29  United Presbyterian Church, Clarion – Rev. Bill Kem

Prayers of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill

Week of March 8  United Presbyterian Church, Manilla – Rev. Joel Sutton
Week of March 15  Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, George – Rev. John Pea
Week of March 22  Presbyterian United Church of Christ, LeMars – Rev. Janis Christensen
Week of March 29  First Presbyterian Church, Odebolt – CRE Bill Crawford

Additional Prayer Concerns

Please pray for Marcia Braley, mother of Rev. Brad Braley of First Presbyterian Church in Cedar Falls. Mrs. Braley was in an accident on March 2nd and was hospitalized. She is doing much better and is scheduled to be released from the hospital on March 5th.

Please pray for Josh Ullom, son of Rev. Dr. Dave and Judy Ullom of First Presbyterian Church in Estherville. Josh has cancer back again with stage 4 metastatic lung cancer. He will have chemo IV treatments every two weeks.

Please pray for Wanda Freese, wife of Rev. Kevin Freese of First Presbyterian Church in Battle Creek, as she recovers from shoulder surgery.

Please continue to remember Eric Olson, husband of Rev. Jennifer Olson of United Presbyterian Church in Denison, in your prayers. Eric is recovering a little more each day from surgery to remove a cancerous kidney. He has actually been taking it easy and resting a lot. He won’t be able to lift things for 6 weeks, which is becoming more of a challenge each day! The Olsons would like to thank everyone for the prayers, good wishes, cards and messages. It means so much to both of them to have such wonderful support. If you are interested in reading Eric’s blog, in which he talks about the surgery, you may click on this link: http://coffeeandreflection.com/the-other-side/

Please continue to remember Doug O’Bannon, son of CRE Shari O’Bannon, in your prayers as he continues to battle a liver disease and all the symptoms that come with it.
Sympathy is extended to Rev. Ray Kruger and family on the death of their wife and mother, JoAnn Kruger, on February 25, 2020. Funeral services were held on February 28, 2020 at First Presbyterian Church in Shakopee, Minnesota, and on February 29, 2020 at First Congregational Church in Parkersburg, Iowa.

Condolences may be sent to: Rev. Ray Kruger 927 S. Sibley St. Shakopee, MN 55379

**Churches in Transition**

Please pray for the following churches that are in transition:

**Presbytery of North Central Iowa**
- First Presbyterian Church, Boone
- First Presbyterian Church, Cedar Falls
- First Presbyterian Church, Greene
- First Presbyterian Church, Grundy Center
- First Presbyterian Church, Jesup
- First Presbyterian Church, Reinbeck
- Eden Presbyterian Church, Rudd

**Presbytery of Prospect Hill**
- Elliott Creek Presbyterian Church, Bronson
- Westminster Presbyterian Church, Ida Grove
- First Presbyterian Church, Lake Park
- Community Presbyterian Church, Lawton
- First Presbyterian Church, Manning
- First Presbyterian Church, Odebolt
- First Presbyterian Church, Paullina
- Lakeside Presbyterian Church, Storm Lake
- First Presbyterian Church, South Sioux City

**LeaderWise Rural Mental Health Ministry**

LeaderWise Rural Mental Health Ministry is a community of practice focused on rural mental health and the faith community. On Tuesday, March 10, 2020, at 12:00 noon a zoom call will be held on the rural mental health initiative. Please click [here](#) for more information. For a link to the zoom meeting, please click [here](#).
Scholarship Opportunity

The Dorothy Horn Scholarship provides financial assistance to women from Presbyterian churches who attend the University of Northern Iowa. Dorothy Horn attended the University of Northern Iowa and her estate established this scholarship endowment, which is administered by First Presbyterian Church in Cedar Falls.

Those interested in more information, or an application packet, should contact First Presbyterian Church in Cedar Falls. Materials can be requested by calling 319-277-3930 or by email at firstpres@cfu.net. All applications must be returned by April 1, 2020.

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The Great Plains Small Church Connection
May 4-6, 2020

The Small Church Connection Conference (formerly the Great Plains Wee Kirk Conference) will be held May 4-6, 2020 at Camp Calvin Crest, outside Freemont, Nebraska. This year’s theme is Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord. Kevin McChesney, composer and handbell arranger and musician, is the featured speaker. There will also be workshops on doing newsletters and blogs, technology for the small member churches, music in worship, self-care, prayer and creative/playful art. There will be archery during Tuesday break time led by level 3 NTS Coach Kim Nofel (ably assisted by level 2 NTS instructor Steve Nofel). (FYI – Steve Nofel is the new pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Algona and First Presbyterian Church in Irvington.) Please click here for the conference brochure and registration information.

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Westminster Presbyterian Church in Waterloo has replaced the sound desk in its sanctuary. They are willing to give the replaced desk away to any church that may need it. If your church is interested, please contact the Westminster church office at 319-234-5501.
You Are Cordially Invited

to the

Installation

for

Rev. Steve Nofel

Date: Sunday, March 29, 2020

Location: The installation and Service in Worship of God will begin at 3:00 p.m. at the Irvington First Presbyterian Church located at 204 2nd Street in Irvington, Iowa, and continue in procession to the Algona First Presbyterian Church, located at 101 North Main Street in Algona, Iowa

A reception will follow the installation and service in the Algona First Presbyterian Church’s Fellowship Hall.
Please join Burt Presbyterian Church for a very special evening on Sunday, March 22nd as they welcome Christian recording artist Mark Smeby. Mark is an author/musician/speaker who is all about hope—creating products, resources, and live events all focused around the topic of hope. After living in Nashville for 25 years, Smeby recently moved to Minneapolis. He travels the country sharing the message of hope through his music and speaking engagements—in a variety of locations from churches, corporations, schools, and prisons. His nationally-syndicated radio feature, the "Live Hope Minute," is heard on 250 outlets throughout the U.S., Canada, and South Africa, and is also available as a one-year hardcover devotional. This is sure to be a great time of hope and encouragement for all who attend. Please consider inviting a friend and joining the church for this special event, Sunday, March 22nd at 6:30 p.m. More information about Mark can be found on his website: www.livehopenow.com. A free will offering will be taken to support Mark’s ministry. Refreshments will be served following the program.
2020 Synod School
July 26-31

Theme:
What Shall We Tell Them?

Registration begins March 2, 2020. Catalogs will be mailed to homes and churches in mid-February. In the meantime, please click the link below to view the catalog online.

2020 Synod School Catalog

A few copies of the catalog will also be at each of the upcoming spring Presbytery meetings for both North Central Iowa and Prospect Hill.

Coronavirus News

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has prepared a pandemic preparedness guide for congregations. You may read it here.

Tri-Presbytery Leadership Team Search Committee

The Tri-Presbytery Leadership Team Search Committee has provided an update. You may read it here.

Conflict Workshop

May 18-20, 2020 - Lakeshore Center at Okoboji

This workshop is specifically designed to provide church leaders with the knowledge and tools necessary to address, manage, and resolve conflict in a healthy and effective manner. Participants will learn about conflict management styles, including their own default style, what the other styles look like, and how to grow in their ability to use and understand different conflict management styles. Other components of the workshop will include learning how family of origin influences one’s attitudes about conflict, plus strategies for responding to conflict in the moment, opportunities for prayer, reflection, worship, and much more.

The cost for this workshop is $450 for double occupancy or $550 for single. Limited scholarships are available for PCUSA pastors and lay leaders, sponsored by the Omaha Presbytery Seminary Foundation.

Please click here for an on-line application.

Click here to register ($450-$550).
Poor Richard’s Almanac
by Richard Francis, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Prospect Hill

The late Henri Nouwen described pastors as “living reminders” of the presence of God in people’s lives, and one of his books is devoted to developing that idea.

Most pastors, I suspect, have an idea of what Nouwen means. We see it especially when a person or a family is in crisis—a diagnosis, a death, a conflict—and our presence as pastors changes things. We learn pretty quickly that it doesn’t have anything to with our personality or preparation or piety. It has everything to do with Jesus Christ whose presence is made real by our presence.

Lately I’ve wondered if the church, especially the local church—that is, your church—could think of itself the same way. You are a living reminder of the presence of God in your community. It might help to define yourselves not by what you do, but by who you are.

Your church and your pastor (if you have one) should have received an email asking you to participate in a survey getting at this very thing: what is your mission as a congregation? Not “what could you be doing?” But “what are you already doing, including some things that you don’t think of as mission?” Here’s a link to the survey, which should take you about six minutes: https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5452189/Church-on-the-Corner-World-Mission

It’s not about the Presbyterian Research Services getting information about your congregation so much as it is getting a snapshot of the denomination as a whole. Nevertheless, filling it out should make you stop and think about who you are and what you do as a congregation, and how you are a living reminder of the presence of God in your community.

Blessings,

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Message from Rev. John Molacek, Moderator, Presbytery of North Central Iowa

Dear Saints,

I’m sure you wish there was some sense of order to my little messages, like there was with my predecessors’ notes; but this is what you get: whatever happens to be crossing my mind at the time given to write.

Since I write all my newsletters at the last minute (ask my admin assistant!) this morning (3/5) I’m thinking about the psalms. This year, Central Presbyterian and Maxwell Presbyterian are partnering to celebrate the Great Vigil of Easter on April 11th. This service has a long section of readings—detailing the great sweep of salvation history—and each of those readings has a sung response, usually a psalm. One of
the things we are doing to prepare for this service is to have our choir learn all of the musical portions (of which there are many besides the psalms) so that they can sit among the congregation and help the gathered people of God sing.

At Central Pres. this past year, we’ve also begun singing the psalm of response following the Old Testament lectionary reading. This is a new practice, as I suspect it would be in many of your churches. New practices—as we all know—can be hard; and while most of the congregation has adapted well, I have one member (an ex-Catholic, it’s important to note) who enjoys ribbing me a bit about the psalms. And last night at choir, she arrived late from another meeting and exclaimed, “What’s with all these psalms?!”

A little history, as brief as I can: the time of the Reformation produced three main Protestant “branches”: Lutheran, Reformed (on the British Isles called “Presbyterian”), and Anabaptists. We’re going to set aside the Anabaptists for the purposes of this review.

Between the Lutheran and Reformed, two distinct practices of worship developed. The first, associated with the Lutherans, has been termed the normative principle of worship. The normative principle basically means that practices/rituals/traditions that are not prohibited in Scripture, and are edifying to the people of God, may be used. This is where most Presbyterian churches would land today.

The second practice, however, historically associated with the Reformed churches, is termed the regulative principle of worship. The regulative principle means that nothing should be done in worship that is not expressly commended or commanded by Scripture. This held true for both the elements of worship and the space of worship. So, no paraments, no crosses, no images, no vestments (the black robe is technically not a vestment), no stoles, no anointing oil at baptisms, no ashes, and (one could argue this point in Scripture, but nonetheless), no instruments and no new hymns/songs/spiritual songs. [An aside: also, no Christmas, no Easter, etc. Every Sunday is the Lord’s Day, and there is no holier day.] The argument was that God had already provided the words needed to be sung in praise: the psalms.

So, Reformed worship was marked by radical simplicity, which, interestingly and importantly, is still a principle of worship held up in our Directory for Worship.

I share all of this to try and hold up the importance that the Psalms held in Reformed/Presbyterian worship. They were the hymnbook of the church and their words, ideas, emotions, and sentiments, shaped the Reformed churches for centuries.

It was not until about the mid-19th century that Presbyterians began including other hymns and songs in their worship. The first “sanctioned” Presbyterian hymnal was printed in 1830. Even then it was slow. The organ started to make a comeback around this time as well.

Eventually, Presbyterians got used to other hymns and began the main stream of our hymnal history: The Hymnal (1933), The Hymnbook (1955), The Worshipbook (1972), The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990), and Glory to God (2013). And while each of these at least nodded to the use of the Psalter in Presbyterian worship, somewhere along the line on the ground in our churches, the psalms got lost. Nowadays, if a psalm shows up, it’s likely to be used as the call to worship.

Somehow, the psalms have become de facto non grata.

The importance of the psalms in Christian worship first came onto my radar in seminary, when I took a course on the psalms with Dr. Martin Tel, director of music at Princeton Seminary. That course was heavily influenced by John D. Witvliet, director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. I, a child of the Presbyterian Church, was only marginally familiar with the psalms, but their treasures quickly became apparent.

The psalms give us the language of prayer. They express the heights of praise and the depths of lament. They give voice to our anger and desperation. They meet us in the ordinary and the extraordinary.
We can pray the psalms for ourselves, for other Christians around the world, and for the world as a whole. Perhaps most importantly, we can pray the psalms with Jesus, who as a Jew, would have used these words for prayer. But there is also something to *singing* the psalms in prayer, for that was their original setting; sung prayer to God.

I’m not sure exactly what my goal or purpose is in writing this note to you all, except to encourage all of us to spend some time with the psalms. Especially in this season of Lent, the psalms can give voice to our cries for restoration and they clearly allow us to see Christ in prayer and invite us to pray with him. I guess, more specifically, I want to encourage Sessions and pastors to prayerfully discern what more prominent place the psalms might have in the worship of our churches. Although they may no longer be our only source of sung praise (and I don’t think they should be), they are still God-given words of praise for the edification of the church and to the glory of God’s name.

Something rich is missing from our life together when they are neglected.

Blessings in this Lenten journey,

John Molacek

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**Commissioned Pastor Conference**

The Commissioned Pastors Network of the Synod of the Sun presents the Empowering Commissioned Pastors Conference to be held May 13-16, 2020, at Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church, Richardson, Texas (Dallas – Fort Worth area).

This conference will be all about and for Commissioned Pastors in all the varied circumstances and ways that CPs serve the Church. If you are actively training to become a CP, but have not yet been commissioned, this conference is for you as well!

PC(USA) Co-Moderators Rev. Cindy Kohlmann and RE Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri will be there to help lead plenary sessions and the event will also feature excellent workshops that will support Commissioned Pastors and strengthen skills and ministries. This conference is focused on Empowering Commissioned Pastors as they serve an increasing portion of our PC(USA) congregations.

Limited scholarships are available on a first-request basis, offered only to Commissioned Pastors (CPs, CLPs, CREs, etc.).

Early registration (by March 23, 2020) - $125
Regular registration (March 23-April 15) - $150

Please click on this link for more information and to register: [https://www.synodsun.org/ecpc](https://www.synodsun.org/ecpc)
Accepting Apollos Applications, Transcripts and References

Now thru Monday, April 15, 2020

Could you use $4000 per semester for up to 3 years?

You are eligible for an Apollos Scholarship from Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation if you are ...

- A member of a PC(USA) Congregation
- Under care within a presbytery as an Inquirer or Candidate
- Enrolled as a full-time student in the Master of Divinity degree program in one of the 10 Presbyterian seminaries
- An individual who possesses quality of excellence for ministry

CLICK HERE TO APPLY

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO ABOUT APOLLOS SCHOLARSHIPS

1954-2020 66 years of financial aid to seminary students

Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation
7101 Mercy Road, Suite 216
Omaha, NE 68106-2616
402 397-5138

http://www.omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.org/
Churchwide Gathering of the Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women’s 2021 Churchwide Gathering will be held August 5–8, 2021 in St. Louis, Missouri!

The theme for the Gathering is “Rejoice in Hope” based on Romans 12:12–13, “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

Please click on this link for more information:
https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what_we_do/build-community/churchwide-gathering/

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The link for on-line registration is:
Helpful Links

Rev. Shawn Harmon was ordained to service as a mission worker with The Antioch Partners, a mission sending agency that works in partnership with Presbyterian churches in the US. You can read more about them here: https://www.theantiochpartners.org/. You may contact Shawn directly at: harmonhusky@gmail.com. To support Shawn financially: www.theantiochpartners.org/giving. For online giving select “partner support for partners not listed for security reasons” and type “Harmon, Shawn.”

The Iowa Heart Foundation recommends that Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) be placed wherever people gather. AEDs have become so advanced that almost anyone can use them safely. Click here for more information.

If you feel as if you’re at the end of your rope or the recent floods or low crop prices have left you feeling hopeless, please click here to find a group or network who may be able to help.

Your Iowa Life – if you or a loved one are facing a problem with alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health or suicide thoughts, you’re not alone. That is why the Iowa Department of Public Health has created YourLifeIowa.org so Iowans can chat live, text or call and get reliable treatment options and find nearby help. https://yourlifeiowa.org/

Farm Crisis Ministry Network - supporting farmers and those who love and care for them, sharing resources for farm families, congregations, and rural communities. https://www.facebook.com/farmcrisisministry/

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Spectrum Spirituality Project – support resources for families with one or more children who have a sensory, emotional, and/or behavioral disorder; also equip congregations to welcome and serve these families.
https://www.facebook.com/pg/spectrumspirit/about/?ref=page_internal

Iowa Faith Leadership Network – to provide a space for faith leaders to develop interfaith and ecumenical relationships, collegiality, and cooperation; to share resources, ask questions, and learn together; to improve our collective ability to minister to the faith communities we serve as well as to better the lives of people in the communities around us.
https://www.facebook.com/iowafaitheaders/