

Broken Bread

Newsletter of Social Ministries for Peace & Justice, Des Moines Presbytery
Volume 30 · Number 2

SMALL CHURCHES



The Presbyterian Church (USA) is a denomination predominately made up of small churches, defined as worship attendance of 100 or fewer persons. Most of the churches of the Presbytery of Des Moines reflect this demographic. This issue of *Broken Bread* focuses on small with examples of vibrant small church ministries here in the Presbytery;

EDITOR: HAE Nancy Lister-Settle
PRESBYTERY OF DES MOINES
2400 – 86th Street, Ste. 20
Urbandale, IA 50322-4306
www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org

a look at rural ministry in El Salvador supported by local congregations; and an inspiring story of small and rural from Africa.

From the manual "New Times New Call" produced by the Presbyterian Small Church Network

Vital small churches minister out of a sense of God's blessing and abundance.

Sometimes a congregation begins to explore options for pastoral ministry during times of despair and fear of not surviving. A good exploration process seeks to discern God's will. Bible study, theological reflection and prayer are essential nourishment for a congregation during this time of seeking out its reason for being. And it is hoped that this process also will open the way for a congregation that might be suffering from despair to move into a ministry of gratitude for the gifts God has bestowed upon it.

The story of Jesus feeding the five thousand is always

helpful in reflecting on the meaning of scarcity and abundance (Mark 6:35-44).

The crowds were gathered to hear Jesus. After many hours, it was late and people were hungry. Jesus directed the disciples to go and find food to feed the people. Alarmed by the perceived enormity of the task, the disciples countered with the suggestion that they take time to allow the people to go and get their own food. Jesus, however, persisted and taught the disciples how to make the task manageable. First, get the people into small groups; then assess what is available on site, and share it among the people. Was there enough to go around? Not only was everyone fed, but there was much left over.

Consider these questions:

How often has your congregation like the disciples been overwhelmed by the tasks of ministry and mission?

Have you, like the disciples, reacted by declaring that you

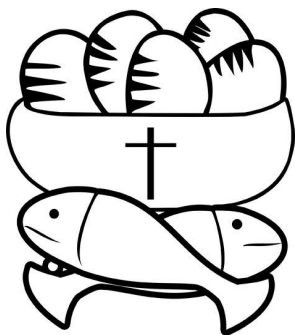
couldn't carry out the task and suggesting that others do it?

Have you taken time to assess the resources available within your congregation, community, presbytery, synod and General Assembly? (Remember that resources include people, property, materials, as well as finances.)

Have you matched your resources with what God is calling you to be and do?

Have you taken time to be thankful for the abundance of resources available to you? Have you chosen to use the resources that you have as you engage in ministry and mission?

Smaller churches have resources- gifted pastors and members, the community, church building and site, finances, and a connectional denomination. Opportunities for discernment and exploring new paths- for doing things differently- are, in fact, blessings from God.



A Rural Church Practicum

By Rev. Ross Blount, farmer and pastor, United Presbyterian Church, Allerton

In August The United Presbyterian Church of Allerton hosted an Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary student interested in rural church and bi-vocational ministry.

Sarah Chancellor has completed her first year at APTS and hopes to complete a dual-degree program with a Doctor of Ministry and a Master's in Social Work at the University of Texas School of Social Work.

During her three week practicum, Sarah had visits, outings, and home stays with 16 different families. She met more of us at Bible Study, choir practice, Sunday School, Ice Cream / Pool Party, at Session and Trustee meetings and at a meeting of the Des Moines Presbytery. She visited our places of work and shared in our worship with children's sermon, assisting with communion, and preaching. Her outings+ included the Clio Festival, Corydon Old Settlers, the Prairie Trails Museum, the State Fair, and an evening with the girls+. All this was topped off with a grand tour of Wayne County with Milo and Norma Bettis!



A study component of the practicum included:

RURAL CHURCH / RURAL COMMUNITY

A review of the recent photographic directory of members of our church.

Demographics from the church's Annual Statistical Report.

A review of the US Congregational Life Survey, a nationwide survey of local churches offered by our General Assembly Research Services. We also examined the Allerton church's survey results. [You can also learn more about the US Congregational Life Survey and see data for our church by going to:

www.uscongregations.org

Login for Allerton is: Allerton PC. Password is: PG130.]

TENTMAKING+/ BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

We studied a basic primer on bi-vocational ministry: Robert LaRochelle, Part-Time Pastor Full-Time Church, The Pilgrim Press, 2010.

We examined the extensive collection of information about tentmaking / bi-vocational

ministry found on Presbyterian and Episcopal tentmaker web sites:

www.pcusatentmakers.org
and www.nassam.org

Our practicum with Sarah has been an opportunity to reflect on our ministry here in Wayne County and to share with a seminarian who is interested both in the rural church and in bi-vocational ministry.

For Such a Time as This



Launched by the Presbyterian Mission Agency in fall 2009, For Such a Time as This was designed to renew and grow small churches and help them to become healthy, missional congregations. The program pairs small, underserved congregations in rural, small town, and urban settings with recent seminary graduates in a two-year pastoral-residency relationship, during which they are supported and guided by a cluster of pastor-mentors.

From Presbyterian News Service, August 28, 2013:

LOVE IS A VERB

LOUISVILLE The word love is thrown around a lot as a term of affection for everything from shoes to music, but

real love demands action and commitment, said the Rev. Keri Shelton, a pastoral resident and mentor with For Such a Time as This.

Shelton was speaking at the commissioning of nine For Such a Time as This pastoral residents.

The new class of pastoral residents will serve congregations in the presbyteries of Florida, Heartland, Missouri, Union, Northern Kansas, Southeastern Illinois, Tampa Bay, and West Virginia.

New seasons and new stories in the church always begin with celebration, said Linda Valentine, executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. As we commission the members of the class of 2013, we affirm their gifts as transformational leaders in and for Christ's church. This service is designed to remind them that as they go forth in ministry, they go with God. They also go surrounded by the support and encouragement of the whole PC(USA).

Preaching on John 21:15-19, Shelton reminded the residents that love is a verb.

Jesus is trying to help Peter understand that loving him requires more than mere words of affection, she said. Christ calls Peter and each of us, as individuals and communities of faith, to follow him

even when and where we would rather not go.

The residents in the program will answer this call daily in their new ministries.

Jesus knew that such a call would not always be easy for Peter. He told him that his life would change and that he would no longer be in control.

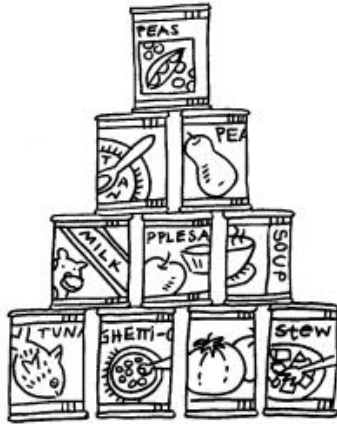
While the call to ministry is not always easy, Christ does not send us out alone, Shelton said, adding that the residents will have the power of the Holy Spirit and a network of colleagues, mentors and presbytery leaders to provide support.

In the program, each pastoral resident is assigned a pastor-mentor from the presbytery. The residents and mentors will meet one-on-one and in monthly cluster groups to discuss spiritual practice, ministry and a case study. The residents will also meet at three national gatherings during their two-year terms.

We will nurture you and support you and, when necessary, speak the truth in love to you, Shelton said. You are called to put love into action. To feed, tend and care for God's children.



Three Small Towns with a Food Pantry



by Rev. Ann Johnson, pastor at Monroe Presbyterian Church and Director of the PCM Food Pantry

Today is the second Thursday in August at Monroe Presbyterian Church. This is one of the three times weekly when the PCM Food Pantry is open for business. The door of the church will swing open many times this morning.

A man walks in the door. His hands are loaded with a bag with boxes of Mac and Cheese, two gallons of orange drink, and a huge package of toilet paper. A volunteer and the man carry the items to the Pantry shelves and refrigerator. The man is full of bluster about the weather, but not what is in his hands.

A woman arrives with an amazing haul from the Food Pantry Garden her church planted. It's a vegetable rainbow spread across the table:

red for the tomatoes and red onion; yellow for the squash and the sweet corn; green for the green peppers, cucumbers, zucchini; a deeper green for the jalapeno peppers; and a deep purple for a different sort of pepper they had planted this year.

A woman stops in with neatly packaged cabbage heads. She tells of how she and her sister neatly trimmed the heads as the garden had been pelted with hail days before. The sisters had wrapped each head in plastic wrap for safe-keeping in the refrigerator.

These are Thursday's stories. The stories of generosity could fill pages such as these:

" Through the year, school kids of a variety of ages bring in their collection from a food drive. The pride written across these young people's faces is amazing as they dig out the cans of pasta sauce or a can of green beans.

" Recently RAGBRAI rolled through the area. One family opened up their family's pond for bikers to take a dip. Half of the free will donation from the pond swimming comes to the Food Pantry (the other half goes to the Heifer Project).

" More than once, a child comes in with money that he or she collected in lieu of gifts at his or her birthday party.

" Service organizations send contributions.

" Businesses give gifts, including the local coop that receives matching funds from the corporation, Land O Lakes.

For little over a year, the PCM Food Pantry has been a partner agency with the Food Bank. The Pantry purchases food at 14 cents a pound. About 1500 pounds of food is what the Pantry averages purchasing

The backbone of the financial and volunteer support comes from the churches of Prairie City, Monroe, and Reasnor. From the smallest to the largest, each church makes donations. The Board for the Food Pantry draws from all these congregations.

Monroe Presbyterian Church has housed the Pantry for the last seven years. The church's members and friends take pride in its mission of offering space. Many people from the congregation volunteer their time and effort for a variety of jobs.

Today the door continues to swing open and closed. Mostly women, yet a few men, sometimes trailing children with them have also arrived at the Pantry that morning, their hands empty. Once the client checks in with a volunteer to note his or her use in the simple record book, the client heads to the Pantry. The shelves are stocked with all sorts of food. Milk and

eggs wait in the refrigerator along with a variety of fresh vegetables. The meat is in the freezer. The toilet paper is stocked on the shelves. Outside in the hallway, a black cabinet stands open with personal care items such as shampoo, soap, deodorant, razors, and a lone bottle of dish soap. Diapers of various sizes are available for a client if they ask for them.



The PCM Food Pantry is a choice pantry, meaning the clients select what they want from the shelves rather than being handed a pre-selected sack. The rule is the client is allowed two grocery sacks of items, including the designated four rolls of toilet paper and two meat items. Clients can come as often as once a week. Some do. Others vary widely how often they come.

Since the Pantry implemented set hours of operation the numbers have dramatically increased. In the month of July 2013, the Pantry made 108 distributions. This number is a little over the average. Summer is the time of our most use due to school being out of session.

The people who receive food often leave stories behind.

Today a man tells of his granddaughter's recent court appearance and the resulting sentence. Stories spill out in the midst of picking out food and other items. Clients offer ongoing health reports on ailments that have been plaguing them or of a job lost or gained.

I joke that this Presbyterian Church has a confessional. Yet it is not the same one as one would find in a Catholic Church with priest and parishioner separated by a screen. The confessional in this church is in the Pantry room or at a table in the fellowship hall where confessions are heard weekly. The confessions go beyond a record of sins. Rather these confessions include the obvious struggles of finding work, stretching the paycheck, waiting on the food stamps or child support to arrive. The stories includes troubling tales of abuse, struggles in school with a child, and worries about how he or she will pay the electric bill or fill the gas tank.

The Pantry serves three small towns and environs. Volunteers and clients will see one another on the street or at community events. People may have a history with the person standing before them when their name is checked off in the record book. It is not anonymous work although it's confidential work.



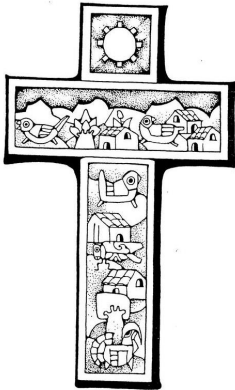
I see the Gospel lived out in the work of the Pantry. When the gifts of food or money arrive in a grand quantity, I observe the story of Jesus's miracle of feeding the 5000. The Pantry may not feed 5000 people, yet the Pantry is available so no one will be hungry. When nearly anyone comes in, I hear Jesus's commandments to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Neighbors receive love in the form of box of spaghetti noodles or a can of chicken noodle soup. To paint a picture of perfection would be untruthful. Sometimes clients get mad at our limits or don't like what we have to offer. Sometimes volunteers get frustrated with clients who seem ungrateful for what is available for them. Sometimes any one of us connected with the Pantry can wonder about the veracity of the client's story.

Jesus told us that there would be times when living the Gospel isn't comfortable and the work at the Food Pantry certainly proves that scripture's truth. What I seek to remember is that we see the

face of Jesus in every face that walks through our door as I remember Matthew 25 when the one group asked, "When did you see us hungry and thirsty and you gave me food and drink?" Jesus replies that when we do the same for the least of these, we do it for him.

Every Year, Growing Food Gets a Little Harder

Life in Rural Berlin, El Salvador



By Rev. Katherine Pater, the Presbytery of Des Moines' Mission Co-worker in El Salvador

Approximately 40% of the population of El Salvador lives in rural areas, and some 80% of these rural dwellers are subsistence farmers.

Berlin, El Salvador is one such area: a rural municipality with many impoverished farmers. They continue living in poverty because a changing climate, economic circumstances, and agronomic conditions have made farming here extremely difficult.

Many of these farmers tell me that they were lucky to have an average harvest last year. In recent years, many farmers have received too much rain, drowning out a huge portion of their bean or corn crops. But even those who were able to harvest more than they had harvested in previous years still worry about feeding their families.

No one knows what the harvest will be like this year. As the people here tell me, the rains always used to arrive in the first week of May and it would rain fairly consistently until October. Now, it is impossible to predict when the rains will come and when they will stop. Every year, one farmer told me, growing food gets a little harder.

Another problem for these farmers is the current price of corn. Because the harvest was better last year than in previous years, there is a greater supply of corn in the market. Since demand for this staple crop has remained relatively stable, its price has stayed quite low. This sounds like good news, and it is, for people who buy corn. But it is terrible news for the people who grow and sell it. Farmers rely on corn not just to feed their families, but they also sell it to purchase everything else that their families need, including clothing, soap,

medicine, water, and farming tools and chemicals. When the price is low, these farmers make almost no money selling their corn. For most of this year, a 40 pound bag of corn has been selling for just \$4-\$6. This means that many families have had trouble affording basic necessities.

One of these basic necessities is chemical fertilizer. The soil of El Salvador has been abused and overworked for centuries, meaning that it will not yield a good crop without the help of chemical fertilizer. Without it, families face starvation. Fertilizer, at its cheapest, costs somewhere between \$50-\$60 a bag, making these essential fertilizers impossible for many families to afford.

In response to this important need, many Iowa churches that have partnered with Berlin-area villages help their Salvadoran brothers and sisters by purchasing a bag or two of fertilizer for them every year. This fertilizer helps families to increase their harvest dramatically. In fact, this generosity might mean the difference between a family's starvation and their having corn left over to sell, making it possible for these families to purchase everything they need that is not made from corn.

The economic, agronomic, and climatic conditions in

Berlin continue to make life difficult for rural farmers. But the Our Sister Parish mission will continue to walk with the people of El Salvador; empowering them, giving them hope, and helping them to build a better country for themselves. In sunlight and in rain, whether the price of corn is too high or too low, we will be here with them.

Naomi

A letter from Nancy Collins in Zambia, September 2013.



I found 21-year-old Naomi Daka in the wilderness of eastern Zambia at Chasefu Theological College (CTC), a seminary with no electricity, no running water, and almost no infrastructure. It was in early 2010. I couldn't help wondering what Naomi's parents thought about their daughter living in such circumstances, the only woman with 11 male colleagues. And I wondered if Naomi's parents approved of their daughter's desire to become a pastor. Pastoring is hard work in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Synod

of Zambia, where solo ministers serve congregations composed of multiple preaching points located kilometers apart and bicycles are the primary mode of transportation. And with 60 percent of the Zambian population under the poverty line, most pastors struggle to manage on subsistence salaries. Plus marriage, the main goal of all Zambian parents for their daughters, becomes difficult for an educated woman living among largely uneducated rural Zambians. It is intimidating for a man to approach a woman who is better educated than he is.

And yet Naomi was at peace. She had come to CTC because it was where she could get the training she needed to fulfill her childhood dream of working for the Lord. Despite the many deprivations and hardships of seminary life at Chasefu, Naomi was contented— even joyful— to be there. She was learning what God wanted her to learn so she could become the person God created her to be. The courses of the three-year Chasefu program— including Systematic Theology and African Traditional Religion— touched her heart and filled her soul.

I saw Naomi again at Chasefu in November 2012. It was a day of great celebration— the licensing of the first class

graduating from Chasefu's three-year diploma in theology program. Naomi and her 11 colleagues, wearing pastoral collars for the first time, made their promises, signed their contracts, and laughed with joy as they were greeted by family, friends, guests, and local residents.



Naomi Daka (center front) with her CTC graduating class.

I saw Naomi for a third time in southern Zambia in early June 2013. In March 2013 Naomi was sent by the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Zambia to pastor the Mazabuka congregation. We picked Naomi up by the side of the road and took her to lunch. After eating, we visited the small dirt-floored, tin-roofed church building where Naomi was happily preparing for her induction ceremony the following Sunday. Somehow on that occasion Naomi seemed very young and vulnerable to take on the pastoral responsibilities for the congregation.

Naomi and her colleagues are constant sources of wonderment and conversion for me.

Their love for Jesus Christ in the face of poverty, disease, and death is a tremendous faith witness to me. In contrast I have seen the limitations of my faith- my unwillingness to depend on God. I have been strengthened and enriched by their example. Let us pray for Naomi's joy, peace and grace as she moves forward with her ministry. Let us pray for all the others among the growing churches in Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda and Kenya whose story is similar to Naomi's.

Nancy Collins serves as PC(USA) Regional Liaison for East Central Africa (Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda and Kenya). She formerly served as a PC(USA) mission co-worker in Egypt and was the companion-ship facilitator for Des Moines Presbytery's Joining Hands partnership.

Rural Partnership Offering Grants: 35 Years of Strengthening Rural Communities

Established in 1978 in the midst of the farm crisis, the Rural Partnership Offering (RPO) has provided funding for some very special ministries in the Presbytery of Des Moines and beyond.

The RPO is an offering unique to this Presbytery, supporting local community based projects as well as the

Presbytery's two international partnerships.

Rural Iowa is full of changes- who is farming, how are they farming, what is happening in the small towns that serve our rural neighbors. This year's RPO grants have gone to two recipients whose projects illustrate both the changing face of Iowa's farmers and the continuing needs in one of our poorest counties.

WOMEN, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE NETWORK: Mother's Egg Money

The "Mother's Egg Money" scholarship fund was established at Women, Food and Agriculture Network with the passing of Mildred Crim, an Iowa farm woman and rural school teacher (1916-2011) by her daughter, Jean Crim Eells. "Egg money" the term to describe cash brought in by farm women who sold eggs or butter to provide clothing and care for their families- had the stigma of being an insignificant amount. Yet during the Great Depression, Mother's egg money often made the difference between success and failure for many farm families.

A 2013 RPO grant was made to this fund which will provide scholarships for women seeking to learn more about soil and water conservation and sustainable agriculture, through conferences and

courses to help them stay current on the best ways to care for their land. The fund honors the faith of Mildred and many farm women in the core values of education and caring for the land as a legacy.

WAYNE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER: Growing Strong Families

Growing Strong Families offers a comprehensive family experience for expectant parents and parents of children 0-5 years of age. Each educator works with 30 families in Wayne County with monthly in-home visits and group meetings. Visits are more frequent for high risk families.

Families connect with community resources and build support networks. The program also helps parents increase their knowledge of early childhood development, improve parenting practices, provide a safe, secure and healthy environment for their children, prevent child abuse and neglect, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and increase children's school readiness and school success.

In the face of decreased funding, a 2013 RPO grant was made to help this program continue to serve rural neighbors in Wayne County.

Print and share!

APPLICATION FOR RURAL PARTNERSHIP OFFERING FUNDING

DATE: _____

CHURCH/ORGANIZATION NAME: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

=====

Program/Project/Idea Description: (attach a separate sheet if necessary)

1) What are you doing/ what do you want to do?

2) Who will benefit?

3) Who will work with you?

4) How do you plan to organize this/how are you organizing this?

5) If this is a continuation of a present program, will this improve your program? If so, how?

6) Is this a new, expanded or ongoing project?

7) How will this project address the ongoing rural crisis?

8) Who are the primary persons involved in organizing and implementing this project?

9) Will any of these persons benefit from the project? If so, please describe how:

Funding Description:

Total cost:

Amount of this request:

Other sources of funding (including your church):

Source

Amount in Hand

Amount Applied For

There is no application deadline for Rural Partnership Offering grant requests. Applications are considered at bimonthly meetings of the Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force. Please return this form to:

Rural Partnership Offering
ATT Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force
Presbytery of Des Moines
2400 . 86th Street, Suite 20
Urbandale, Iowa 50322-4306

or email to CPJ Moderator Nancy Lister-Settle at NeithertheCat@gmail.com

GRAINS OF TRUTH



When you open the door which
you shut
in order to pray to God,
the first person you meet
as you go out
is your neighbor
whom you shall love.
Wonderful!

Soren Kierkegaard

A community is the mental and
spiritual condition of knowing
that the place is shared, and
that the people who share the
place define and limit the
possibilities of each other's lives.
It is the knowledge that people
have of each other, their
concern for each other, their
trust in each other, the freedom
with which they come and go
among themselves.

Wendell Berry



Broken Bread

Presbytery of Des Moines
2400 – 86th Street
Urbandale, IA 50322-4306

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1689
Des Moines,

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



In This Issue:

Small Churches

- A Rural Church Practicum Rev. Ross Blount
- For Such a Time as This Presbyterian Mission Agency
- Three Small Towns with a Food Pantry Rev. Ann Johnson
- Every Year, Growing Food Gets a Little Harder Rev. Katherine Pater
- Naomi Nancy Collins
- Rural Partnership Offering Grants Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force
- Grains of Truth