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THE BANNER

AS I SEE IT ...by Bill Branch & Sallie Watson

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The Presbytery of Arkansas is a governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the northern two-thirds of the State of Arkansas. We are composed of almost 15,400 Presbyterians gathered in 93 congregations and one fellowship, two New Church Developments and one ministry located in various towns and cities in this geographical region.



I want to take this space to thank the people of this presbytery for a wonderful eight years. You have given me much joy and satisfaction as we have worked together for God and the Presbyterian churches of Arkansas. I have made some great new friends and have enjoyed working with some exciting churches.

During this time the presbytery has instituted many new fiscal and programmatic policies. We have brought the whole financial program into the central office and saved the presbytery thousands of dollars in the process. Mark Lenneville did an outstanding job of developing financial and property control procedures. Another step that will free money for mission work has been the construction of the presbytery office building. Since the building note has been paid off, we have that money to go to ministry and mission work.

When I think of mission work, I think with pleasure about our partnership with the Presbytery of Lacandon in Mexico and the mission trips there, the repeated trips to the Gulf Coast for building after the hurricanes, the disaster response team that Emmett Powers, Carl McCormack and Jim Freeman have designed for our presbytery, the great work that has occurred in response to the recent tornadoes and floods, and the remarkable mission work that continues to happen under the direction of David Gill and Ferncliff.

In fact, there have been too many things that have gone into making this a healthy and exciting presbytery for me to remember them all. I only want to say to you, please be as good to Sallie as you have been to me. She is a gift to this presbytery, and I look forward to watching you grow in mission and program under her leadership.

*Grace & Peace,
 Bill*

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, my family and I will have landed in Little Rock! You all have given us such a warm welcome already. I am eager to get to know you better, and to begin serving with you. My first day in the office will be Monday the 14th. Bill and I have been in touch frequently over the last few weeks so that I can be up to speed as much as possible.

What a wonderful staff you have! Brian and Pauline and NiAnn and Joan have lavished us with hospitality. I am so impressed with the ministry that Emmett (Rev. Powers, director of Disaster Response Team) is coordinating with PDA. And I am looking forward to working closely with Doyle (Stated Clerk Webb) and Jackson (Presbytery Moderator Farrow) and all of you.

Please stop by soon for a cup of coffee so that I can get to know you.

And I will be in touch with you as well - I want to visit all of the churches as soon as possible. I'm especially eager to meet those of you who have been on the front lines in the areas affected by the tornadoes and floods. Looking forward to meeting you all soon.

Blessings to you,

Sallie

(Interim General Presbyter)



Needs and Assistance Continue after Storms, Floods

Just as the Presbytery of Arkansas Disaster Response Team was getting a handle on helping people affected by the February 5th tornadoes, 36 (of 75) counties were hit by March snow and flooding, the latter the worst in 25 years.

The Disaster Response Team promptly contacted churches in areas of the floods and learned that only one sustained damage from a lightning strike. The people of First, Pocahontas, and First, Des Arc, are waiting for the water to recede to assess needs. 150 Church World Service cleanup buckets were delivered on March 31 to Gentry, and 96 were placed in the Mountain View area.



Disaster Response Team director Rev. Emmett Powers of Lonoke and volunteer Mel Dunkle of Searcy unload supplies for tornado survivors in Mountain View.



After a tornado on February 5, 13" of snow on March 6 and a flood on March 18, this sign in Mountain View could easily be the motto for most of Arkansas. Ten tornadoes on April 3 and flooding on the 4th created more needs in new locations.



Part of the nine-member work crew from First, Jacksonville, take a break at Atkins on a March 1st workday.



Mattresses were delivered to families who lost their bedding in Atkins and Gassville as part of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, funded in part by gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

Stories from churches aiding their affected neighbors:

- Children from Second Presbyterian, Little Rock, created gifts, including prayer pillows, for children in Atkins whose homes have been damaged.
- Five people from Central, Fort Smith, joined nine from Central, Russellville, and some from Memorial, Atkins, to re-fence a farmer's field in Atkins on March 15. (continued on Page 3)



Workers like these from PC(USA) congregations are still needed at Cotter to construct storage sheds to shelter valuable belongings while the owners' homes are being repaired.

Needs and Assistance (continued from page 2)

- Nine people from First, Batesville, spent a rainy Saturday cleaning up debris in Mountain View, and the church has collected food, furniture and building supplies.
- At Gassville and Cotter work teams from First, Malvern and Yellville; Kirk in the Pines, Hot Springs Village; and Kirk of the Hills, Fairfield Bay, worked two days on storage sheds to house belongings of tornado survivors while their homes are being repaired.
- The following congregations have donated funds to "tornado relief" and the Presbytery's Disaster Response Team: First at Arkadelphia, Clarksville, Dardanelle, Gurdon, Marianna, McGehee, Pine Bluff and Van Buren; Holly Grove Presbyterian; Westminster, Hot Springs; Kirk in the Pines, Hot Springs Village; Grace, Second, Trinity, Westminster and Westover Hills, all in Little Rock; Central, Russellville; and Presbyterian Women's groups at First, Beebe; Fort Smith, and

Springdale; and at Second, Little Rock; Park Hill, North Little Rock; and at Barr Memorial, Norman. Numerous individuals have also donated.

What is needed now?

- Contact persons to prepare for and report on future emergencies as part of a "Calling Tree."
- Volunteer drivers to transport donated items from the Little Rock area, many from the Disaster Assistance Center at Ferncliff. Most involve no loading, and volunteers' expenses are reimbursed.
- Resource items of yard tools, leather (not fabric) gloves, dressers in very good condition, square-nosed shovels, new sheets or blankets or pillow cases.
- And, of course, continual prayer.

A volunteer group from Synod of the Trinity (Pennsylvania and West Virginia) will be working in Clinton April 20-25.

Please note the current toll-free number for DRT 866.732.6121 or local 501.821.3094.

Together in God's Grace

by Associate General Presbyterian Joan Erickson

What really works and what will work for my church? This is a common query when a church is considering its Christian Education program. The assumption is that this two-part question will result in one answer but that isn't always the case. I have known churches that have more than doubled the number of adults teaching the children by using the rotation model of Sunday School. Then I have also known churches that converted to that style of Sunday School and did not add a single additional adult to those willing to teach. I have known churches that thrive with teachers who individually plan lessons (with the oversight of the session). I have also known churches whose teachers depend totally on being handed a prepared curriculum. I know classes that thrive for years with shared leadership while others that quickly conclude meeting if the one person leading is no longer in that role. Some CE programs thrive on dependable every week sessions while other churches have classes for a specific and limited time period or topic.

So faced with the possibility that the same program can be a success in one church while the opposite in another church, CE planning is most successful when those doing the planning learn not only what the options are but also learn about their particular church membership and leadership thus increasing the chances of success.

May this Easter season be one of continuous discipleship for you and your congregations.

Joan

NEWS OF OUR RETIRED PERSONS

- Congratulations to **Rev. Mike and Merilyn Seitz** of Hot Springs Village on the birth of a grandson, Caleb Michael Seitz, on March 16. Proud parents are Rev. Bill and Jennifer Seitz of Ohio.

- **Norma Swetnam**, wife of **Rev. Walter Swetnam** of Batesville, is recuperating from a broken wrist and hip.

Statistical Reports

I want to thank you for filing your Statistical Reports online. Out of 93 churches, a fellowship and a ministry, 11 churches did not report to General Assembly. We ended the year with an 88% completion rate. To the 11 churches that did not report, we would like to have 100% next year. Thanks again to the churches that participated.

- **Pauline Rhodes**

Presbytery and Financial Administrator

Check out the newly redesigned website for the Presbytery of Arkansas at www.presbyteryofarkansas.org. It's more colorful, user-friendly and detailed than the previous version as a service to church members, leaders and congregations.

NEWS OF OUR CLUSTERS

- **Cluster VII** (central Arkansas), **Cluster VIII** (east central Arkansas), and **Cluster IX** (Pulaski County) will be electing representatives to General Council and Committee on Clusters by the end of July. Cluster IX will elect an elder to General Council and a minister to Committee on Clusters on April 15 at their monthly luncheon.

PEOPLE and CHURCH NEWS

NEWS OF OUR PEOPLE

- **Rev. Barry Williams** of Springfield, Missouri began service as interim pastor of First United, Fayetteville, on April 1.
- **Malinda Kirchner** has been hired as the part-time Director of Planned Giving at Second Presbyterian, Little Rock.
- **Rev. David Dyer**, pastor of First, Jacksonville, is teaching an eight-week series "The History of Everything" (from the cosmos to America) at 'Adventures in Learning' for retirees April 2 - May 22.
- Co-pastor **Rev. David Schaller** of First, Jonesboro, had his beard shaved as he had promised in celebration of the pay-off of recent church building repairs. Dr. Mike Thompson, chair of the Capital Improvement Task Force, acted as "barber."
- **Rev. Nancy Benson-Nicol**, chaplain of the University of the Ozarks, Clarksville, recently wrote the article "Celebrating the Gifts of Women" in "Horizons" magazine of Presbyterian Women.
- **Commissioned Lay Pastor Elizabeth Hardin** of Hot Springs Village is recuperating from eye surgery. She serves First, Gurdon.
- Congratulations to **Rev. Jesse Gonzalez and wife Bertha** of Springdale on the birth of a grandson, Noah Jacob Gonzalez, on March 25 in Fayetteville. Proud parents are Jesus Isai and Heather Gonzalez. Jesse is the Presbytery Evangelist for the Hispanic New Church Development in Springdale.

NEWS OF OUR CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

- **First, Berryville**, hosted the community Easter early morning service and received a facelift with new siding and trim.
- **First, Pocahontas**, collects non-perishable food every Sunday and, as a congregation of 50, gathered 350 cans and packages of food for the Randolph County Food Bank when stated supply Rev. Robert Norvell of Jonesboro and the Olvey family offered to match one-to-one any donated item.
- **First, Rogers**, recently held a brown bag lunch for members interested in helping with pastoral care needs of that church.
- **First, Batesville**, schedules two unusual fellowship events each month - Lunch Bunch for men and women on the first Wednesday at a local restaurant and Second Sunday Luncheon after morning worship.
- **First, Mountain Home**, is training first responders in CPR and operating the defibrillator in emergency situations at church functions.
- **First, Prairie Grove**, is developing a photo directory

in-house without using a commercial company.

- **First, Jacksonville**, collected "green" canned vegetables for the local food pantry in celebrating St. Patrick's Day.
- **First, Yellville**, will have a Congregational All-Church Retreat on three Sundays as they prepare to move into their new building in June.
- **Trinity Presbyterian, Little Rock**, has launched a quarterly evening service of worship in fellowship hall with the "message" presented in a variety of forms and contemporary music alongside traditional and classical selections.
- **First, Little Rock**, publishes a treasurer's report on cash flow and special funds in their newsletter.
- **Westminster Presbyterian, Hot Springs**, has expanded internet service to computers in the Village of Westminster after-school program and Sunday School classes.
- **First, Dardanelle**, hosted the training modules of the Presbytery's lay academy from September, 2005 through November, 2007.
- **Pulaski Heights Presbyterian, Little Rock**, will host a benefit supper and silent auction on April 10 to benefit the Stewpot feeding at **First, Little Rock**.
- **First, Malvern's** Presbyterian Women, women on Session and girls in youth group will lead worship on Mother's Day, May 11.
- A sermon formation group meets with the pastor to prepare for worship at **Holiday Island Presbyterian**.
- **First, Harrison**, held an Easter Vigil service that night before Easter which included lighting the new light, reading scripture, food, drinks and fellowship.
- **Mount Vernon Presbyterian, Pea Ridge**, hosts groups including people working to lose weight, veterans, Girl and Brownie Scouts, Boy and Cub Scouts, quilters and business women.
- **First, Clarksville**, invites everyone to hear Rev. Heinrich Eiler of Hot Springs Village share research on the German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Friday night, April 11, and Saturday, April 12. To make reservations, phone 479.754.2942.
- **First, Pine Bluff**, will celebrate their sesquicentennial May 15-18.

Idea of the Month

Joanne Mosley, wife of **Rev. Jim Mosley**, and the PW Circles of Second Presbyterian, Little Rock, are suggesting that everyone who receives this spring's economic stimulus refund consider donating all or a portion to Presbyterian agencies that assist lowest income people who may not receive the payment.

NEWS and OPPORTUNITIES

2nd Annual Presbytery-Wide Mission Trip to the Gulf Coast

October 12-18, 2008

Who: Anyone (age 18 and older) is invited to go on this trip.

When: We will leave on Sunday, October 12th at 9:00 a.m. and return late Saturday, October 18th from Westminster Presbyterian Church in Hot Springs.

What: While specifics are still unknown, most likely we will be doing light construction assistance work.

Where: We will be working in the area of Orange Grove, Mississippi through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

Why: We want to help rebuild and restore hope to the people of the Gulf Coast.

Cost: The cost is \$20.00 per day for room and board.

Deadline for Registration: September 1, 2008

More Information: Contact Susie Wright (501.525.1367 or 501.620.3335) to let us know of your interest in this mission trip.

MISSION CORNER

(How is our benevolent offering to Presbytery used?)

Each year at Christmas time the First Presbyterian Church of Mena hosts students from around the world. These are young people who are studying in the U.S. and have neither the time nor the financial resources to return to their native lands.

Since college campuses often shut down during the Christmas holidays they would have nowhere to go if it were not for the Christmas International House program in which the Mena Church participates. Through a grant from the Presbytery of Arkansas the Mena Church is able to host and entertain students each year. For many of these students, this is their most meaningful contact with Christians in this country. Your benevolent gifts to the Presbytery of Arkansas help to make this program possible.

Spirituality Retreat Listening to God

... in scripture and in prayer
... in the ordinary and in nature
... in spiritual companionship
led by Rev. Sally Johnson of San Antonio



PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

Synod of the Sun
Friday - Sunday, May 23 - 25
Lyon College, Batesville

See website

(<http://www.presbyteryofarkansas.org/frmPresWomen.aspx>)
for details and registration by May 12.

Grace Marks Holy Week



The congregation at Grace Presbyterian, Little Rock, created a Spirituality Center with artwork, prayer weaving, music, their canvas labyrinth (shown above) and other thoughtful activities in their Fellowship Hall in March.

Are you receiving The Banner by e-mail?

Here are the top four advantages to e-mail reading:

- Same day delivery
- Full color photos
- Live links - go directly to websites to read more
- Savings of trees, paper, time and money

Just e-mail pbyarkansas@sbcglobal.net to receive the May Banner by e-mail.

It's time to order your Presbyterian Planning Calendar! The new calendar covers June, 2008 through May, 2009. For more information, go to: www.pcusa.org/planningcalendar

Cracking a Tough Nut

Evangelism continues to be a really tough nut to crack for many Presbyterians.

We worry about our shrinking churches, but we are not comfortable, by and large, talking with people outside the church (or sometimes inside it!) about our faith.

What can we do to help change this culture of silence into one that connects with people who need to hear good news? Here are a few suggestions I have picked up around the church.

Give people in your church a chance to craft and practice their faith “elevator speech.” When I was a candidate for Moderator of the 217th General Assembly (2006), someone told me that I must be able to tell someone why they should want me to be Moderator between the time they got on an elevator with me and the time they got off. I think every Presbyterian should have an “elevator speech” in answer to questions such as, why are you a Christian? What difference does God make in your life? It would give us a jumping off place to talk about faith and help us get over our evangelistic lockjaw.

Carry a give-away Bible. Buy several small, inexpensive Bibles or Scripture portions and mark with a highlighter some passages that are particularly powerful for you in terms of the gospel message. Carry one of these around with you in your car, purse, or in your carry-on bag when you fly. If you get into a religious discussion, give the person the Bible with your blessing and invite them to read the marked passages. You can even read the passages with them to open the door to further conversation.

Pray that God will bring people across your path who need to hear of and experience God’s love. Expect it to happen. Pay attention and be prepared to respond graciously and authentically. There really are people out there who are desperate to hear some good news about themselves and the world. We have that good news! If we are willing, God will use us to plant seeds of the gospel in people’s lives.

A monthly column for the church-at-large by The Reverend Joan S. Gray, Moderator of the 217th General Assembly (2006) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). March, 2008.

- LAST CALL TO REGISTER -

Annual Retreat for Ministers, Educators and Commissioned Lay Pastors



*Nominee for Stated Clerk of the PC(USA)
Rev. Gradye Parsons will be the featured speaker.*

**4:00 p.m. Sunday, April 27, through
Noon Tuesday, April 29
at Ferncliff Camp**

**“Taking Care of Yourself--
Taking Care of Your Call”**

See website

(<http://www.presbyteryofarkansas.org/frmPresbyteryDocuments.aspx>)

**for schedule and registration
(register by April 20).**



Campus Ministry Educational Event May 19–23, 2008

Campus ministers are invited to attend three special sessions that will focus on the particular challenges and opportunities of campus ministry. These discussion-based sessions will focus on the changing nature of college-age ministry and the trend to congregation-based campus ministry.

Funds have been secured to offer this opportunity at substantial savings to leaders in campus ministry.

Cost: \$100

Housing is in Pilot House and Pheasant Run. Conference fee includes room, board, and tuition.

For all currently doing campus ministry and all who would like to in the future. See Mo-Ranch website for details and registration.

<http://www.moranch.com/index.php?c=12&sn=123&conf=6>



RESOURCE CENTER NEWS

April, 2008

9221 North Rodney Parham Road
Little Rock, AR 72227-6201
Phone 501.663.2424, ext. 104
Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

NiAnn Thompson, Director
niannt@sbcglobal.net

— RAVE REVIEWS from patrons of YOUR Resource Center let us know what worked well in your educational or programming setting. Keep them coming please because we value your opinions.

Sheila Batterton of First, Yellville has used and applauds “Rich,” one of the “**Nooma**” DVDs, with their youth group. They read the scripture suggested, watched the 11-14 minute presentation, had a time to reflect and then discussed the content later. The teens commented “Media has finally done something right!” and “That really made me think.” YOUR Resource Center now has the following titles in the Nooma series of “short films with communicators that really speak to us” and “touches on issues that we care about, that we want to talk about, and it comes in a way that fits our world.” “Breathe” (on the meaning of breathing, both physical and spiritual, and the way God created us

human), “You” (on the first Christians and their lives in the context of the world they lived in). “Store” (anger seen everywhere, its root and what is actually worth getting angry about). “Today” (on longing for the past and its effect on living in the present with appreciation and understanding). “Name” (on comparing ourselves to and being defined by others’ opinions). “Rich” (on accepting that what we have is enough, despite images to the contrary, and that we should bless others with our blessings). Batterton predicts “when the churches know you have these great DVDs, they’ll be eager to use them.”

Rev. Susan Arnold, co-pastor of First, Hot Springs, reports that her Lenten study group enjoyed Rev. Ken Bailey’s video study of “**The Historical Jesus**” (Acc. #VC7924) so much that they chose next his video studies of the parables in Luke.

TAKE A LOOK BEFORE YOU PLAN FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

—“**Rainforest Adventure**” published by Augsburg Fortress (Lutheran) is the curriculum endorsed and approved by the PC(U.S.A.) this year. “A Tree Top Bible Blast” is based on the challenge of caring for God’s creation, the scripture “Every tree in the forest will sing joyful songs to the Lord” (1 Chronicles 16:33), and covers the Bible stories of Boaz and Ruth, Elisha feeding the 100, the mustard seed, Jesus the vine, and Jesus enters Jerusalem. The exam kit in YOUR Resource Center contains a preview DVD, leader guide, songbook, age appropriate Bible book, crafts, games, storytelling, science, and director guide for preschool-grade six.

—“**Beach Party**” published by Cokesbury (Methodist) is another popular VBS option, subtitled “Surfin’ Through the Scriptures.” Bible stories include Call of Gideon, David, Unforgiving Servant, Woman Healed and Jesus and Thomas for preschool, youth and adult.

—“**Power Lab**” published by Group Publishing (non-denominational) is based on a simple Bible point each day: Jesus healing, Jesus giving sight, Jesus giving courage to walk on water, Jesus dying and being resurrected and the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; kit is for infants through youth. YOUR RESOURCE CENTER has a program overview comparing and contrasting eight of the 2008 VBS curricula as well as a number of undated VBS resources for loan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RECENT SMALL CHURCH CONFERENCE

—Keynoter Dr. David Ruesink recommended the following, all of which are in the Resource Center: “**Inside the Small Church**” (Acc. #BK8483), “**New Times-New Call**” (Acc. #BK8211), “**Seeds in the Wind**” (Acc. #BK8988), “**Living the Vision: Rural Ministry**” (Acc. #BK8213) and “**Living the Vision: Small Church Ministry**” (Acc. #BK7491).

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ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

CALENDAR

- Apr 12 General Assembly Commissioners Training, Fellowship Hall, Belair, Pine Bluff, 10-1
- Apr 12 Campus Ministry Subcommittee of CE&N, Presbytery Office, 10-2
- Apr 13 Installation of Drew Travis as pastor, First, Conway, 4:00 p.m.
- Apr 15 Cluster III meeting, First, Walnut Ridge
- Apr 15 Cluster IX meeting and election, Grace, Little Rock, 11:30 a.m.
- Apr 19 General Council, Grace, Little Rock, 10:00 a.m.
- Apr 26 Pink Hat Day, Vera Lloyd Home, Monticello, 10 a.m.
- Apr 26 Committee on Mission, First, Conway, 9:30 a.m.
- Apr 26 Comm. on Administration, First, Conway, 10 a.m.
- Apr 27-29 Pastors, CLPs & Christian Educators Retreat, Ferncliff, Apr 27 4:00 p.m. to Apr 29 4:00 p.m.
- Apr 29 Deadline for submission of articles and photographs for the May Banner

For details and additional activities go to:
<http://www.presbyteryofarkansas.org/frmEventCalendar.aspx>
(or go to <http://www.presbyteryofarkansas.org> and click on "Event Calendar")

**Leaders Installed at
2008 Presbyterian Women
Spring Gathering**



Synod Presbyterian Women Moderator Sheron Antczak installed members of the Arkansas Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team during the April 5 Spring Gathering at the Presbyterian Church of Bella Vista. Pictured are: Kathy White, Mary Beth Lysobey, Ginni Miller, Karene Jones, Susan Bourg, Linda Norvell, Cissy Rose, Jean Razer and Dawn Scarborough.