



## May You Be Blessed This Season!

As I consider this Advent season, I am reminded of those who shaped my life, but are no longer present.

I am the youngest of five children and my older brothers remind me that my dad changed his habits from his first son to his last son. My older siblings remember my dad as a harsh taskmaster. I remember my dad as the one delivering Christmas baskets from our family to those less fortunate in our neighborhood.

My maternal grandmother lived most of her life in a home without running water. Yet, when friends or relatives stopped by, they never left Grandma's house before eating at her kitchen table. Grandma's breads, jellies, sauces, and baked goods were always tasty and abundant. My mother once commented about her mother, that even in the slimmest economic times, if someone came to their door, they were fed. My mom practiced this same hospitality passed down from her mother. If anyone came to our home, they were offered coffee and a little lunch.

Cheri's dad, whom I never had the pleasure to meet, had a dear friend. This man suffered the loss of physical mobility and mental capacity. Cheri's dad was one of the few friends that continued to visit weekly. At this friend's funeral, his wife told Cheri's dad that he was the most faithful of all her late husband's friends. She shared how much this meant to her and she was sure her late husband also appreciated this friendship even though he could no longer say the words.

I pray that you will have an opportunity to remember those in your past and present who have shown Christian love to you and those around you. I pray that you will become the memories of Christian love in action to your family and friends.

Have a blessed and meaningful Christmas,  
Marli

I woke up this morning to see that snow had fallen lightly overnight; the smell of the air last night should have been an indication of what was coming. The lights around town decorating the trees and adorning the houses are another indication of what is coming. Just as the air smelling of snow grabs the child in me with excitement, so too, do the lights touch on something inside of me that waits in excited anticipation.

Now, I know not everyone will be feeling the same as I do. For some that anticipation of the coming season may be with trepidation - the holidays won't be festive because of losses and grief laid bare.

God is in the midst of our anticipation; present and powerful in the midst of our preparations and trepidations. The gift of God's Son in a manger comes with a cross in the future. God's gift is a gift of life for us now as well as for those who have died. With anticipation we await the acknowledgement of Jesus' first coming and the advent of his second coming. We can seek comfort, and even joy, from both, no matter how we approach the coming holiday.

My prayer for you this Christmas is that Christ who dwells in your heart bring you peace, that the Spirit who dwells in your being bring you joy, and that God who dwells within you and embraces you bring you into life, now and eternally.

To you the blessings of Christmas,  
Pastor Jessica

**(more Christmas greetings)**

*What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:4b-5)* At a time when the world may not seem to be offering much in the way of light or joy or future, God steps in to offer us all three. The Word of God—Jesus the Christ—has redeemed our lives from hopelessness, and our futures from uncertainty. My hope and prayer is that your heart will beat a little faster with the joy of this truth this season, because it comes to us whether we see only darkness around us, or whether life is full of excitement and promise.

May God bless you richly this season and beyond. You have all been a great blessing to me in this past year!

*Pastor Cheri Danielson*

# **New Advent Services in Tri-County Ministry**

## ***Hanging of the Greens***

What is Advent? Why do the Advent colors mean? Why do we put up a Christmas tree? These questions and others will be answered during the ***Hanging of the Greens*** service, which will take place on the first Sunday in December for several TCM churches.

This service is a celebration of the season! We will read scripture, sing Advent songs, and decorate (or partially decorate) the church while we hear the stories and explanations behind our decorations.

Sunday School children and youth will be involved in the readings and the decorating, and some congregations will be sharing hot chocolate and treats afterward.

## ***Longest Night Service***

At the same time we celebrate with joy this season, we are also aware that it is not a happy season for everyone. In fact sometimes it's very painful, and many find it depressing for various reasons. It may remind us of the absence of a loved one who has died. We may yearn for a loved one who is away fighting in a war. We may suffer from a broken relationship, unemployment or worries about unemployment, ill health or isolation. We may have special concerns for those who are homeless or hungry.

When this is true we need encouragement to live the days ahead of us. And so we have opportunity to come together to remember that God's presence is for those who mourn, for those who struggle; and that God's Word comes to shine as a light in our darkness.

### **Longest Night Christmas Service**

**Sunday, December 21**

**3:00 – 4:00 pm**

**Trinity in Binford**

(a time of fellowship will follow the service)

*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light:  
Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them the light shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

**The McVile Area Community  
Choir  
Presents**

**“Go Tell It!”**

**Christmas Cantata**

**Sunday, December 14  
7:30 p.m.  
McVile Lutheran Church**

**All are welcome!  
Lunch served following musical  
presentation**

# Christmas in TCM

## Caroling

Saturday, December 20 in Binford  
(meet at 6:30 at Trinity)

Sunday, December 21 in Cooperstown  
(meet at 7:00 at Trinity)

## Christmas Programs

December 7:

- Lutheran Church of McVile during 9:30 worship

December 14:

- First Presbyterian during 11:00 worship
- Trinity of Cooperstown during 9:45 worship
- Trinity of Binford at 2:30 (coffee & Christmas goodies to follow)

December 21:

- Faith of Hannaford during worship
- Grace of Grace during worship (soup & sandwiches to follow)
- Our Savior's of McHenry during worship

## Christmas Eve Services

Cooperstown Nursing Home at 2:30

Mabel of Sutton at 3:00

Grace of Grace City at 3:00

McVile Parish at McVile at 4:00

Our Savior's of McHenry at 4:15

Trinity of Cooperstown at 4:30

Trinity of Binford at 5:30

Faith of Hannaford at 10:00

## Christmas Day Service

Trinity of Cooperstown at 10:00 a.m.

# The Presbyterian Connection



The Presbyterian church operates as a democracy. In order to allow the church to be all that God has called it to be, we hope and expect that all members will participate as they are able.

At the fall meeting of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains, Pastors Cheri and Marli Danielson were elected to serve the Presbytery and the broader church in various ways. Marli will serve a three-year term as the PNP representative to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, which also makes him a member of the Presbytery Council. Cheri will serve a three-year term on the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, which deals with all issues relating to churches and ministers.

## TCM in mission

Plans are complete for the trip to the Northlands Rescue Mission on Saturday, December 6. A group of confirmation students and adults from our congregations have signed up to work at the mission during the afternoon. Donations will be accepted in the churches until Wednesday, December 3. Items needed at the center include:

- |                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Coffee</i>            | <i>Tennis shoes</i>            |
| <i>Bikes</i>             | <i>Towels &amp; Washcloths</i> |
| <i>Spices</i>            | <i>Duffle bags</i>             |
| <i>Winter coats</i>      | <i>Warm snow boots</i>         |
| <i>Warm gloves</i>       | <i>Plastic totes</i>           |
| <i>Sweaters</i>          | <i>Flannel shirts</i>          |
| <i>Wallets</i>           | <i>Phone cards</i>             |
| <i>K-Mart gift cards</i> | <i>Laundry soap</i>            |
| <i>Shampoo</i>           | <i>Deodorant</i>               |
| <i>Razors</i>            | <i>Toothbrushes/Toothpaste</i> |

## **SEMINARY ON THE PRAIRIE**

### ***“Development and Redevelopment of Rural Congregations and Ministries”***

*January 12 - 16, 2009  
Red Willow Bible Camp*

*Co-sponsored by Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN  
and Tri-County Ministry*

From the inception of SOP in 2003, TCM has wanted to introduce seminarians to rural ministry in North Dakota. Housing for seminarians has been offered in the homes of TCM members. In addition to getting seminarians here, SOP has also wanted to offer rural educational options that interest church members, lay leaders and pastors to an educational setting right here in TCM local area. For the past several years, this event has been held at Red Willow Bible Camp.

Beginning in 2009, TCM council approved a line item amount for Seminary on the Prairie. This shows how important TCM holds the future of SOP as a rural educational offering. In addition to this support, TCM has a new committee for SOP consisting of interested church members. At this time Robert Delfs, Kathy Larson, Lois Larson, Warren Ophaug, Truley Trautman and Pastor Marli Danielson serve on the SOP committee.

If you have thought of participating in SOP, but have not done so in the past, this year, the Stokkas will be providing the January 14, 2009, Wednesday evening entertainment. Come and experience their down home North Dakota style of music.

Local photographer Scott Tranby will be sharing some of his photos this year as well. Our SOP committee thought it would be fun to share some positive images of life and hope in North Dakota instead of the less hopeful National Geographic 2008 issue.

Please check out the web site for the SOP 2009 brochure. If you have any comments or questions about SOP please contact any of the committee members.

## **Toward an Understanding of Islam**

### **Webcast from Luther Seminary January 26-February 23 (Monday evenings at GCC in Cooperstown, 7:00-9:00)**

Islam has become the second largest religion in the world. What do Muslims believe? How has Islam spread? How diverse is the expression of Islam in the world today? What have been some of the abiding contributions of Islamic culture to the world as we know it? In what ways have some of the churches in the world responded to challenges of living in an Islamic environment? These are some of the questions to be explored in this class.

To pre-register, please contact Pastor Jessica or Theresa Fiebiger.

Cost will depend on the number of participants. The class will be archived for those unable to attend the Monday night sessions.

### **Annual Meetings**

(All meetings follow the morning worship service.)

January 11, 2009

- Our Savior's of McHenry

January 18, 2009

- Grace of Grace City
- First Presbyterian of Cooperstown
- Lutheran Church of McVille
- Our Savior's of Kloten
- Mabel of Sutton
- Faith of Hannaford
- Trinity of Cooperstown

February 1, 2009

- Trinity of Binford

# Coming up at Red Willow Bible Camp



## Dog Sledding Days

- January 2 (general public)
- January 3 (TCM Confirmation students if needed)
- January 24 (TCM Confirmation students)
- February 7 (TCM Confirmation students)
- February 28 (general public)

## Adult Dog Sledding Retreat

- January 16-19 (limited to 6 participants)

## Men's Mid-winter Getaway

- February 20-21

## Family Winter Fest & Wild Game Feed

- February 21

## Confirmation Retreat (Grades 7-9)

- March 6-7

## Creative Memories Scrap Booking Retreat

- March 20-22

## Garden Art Retreat

- March 20-21

## Grades 4-6 Retreat

- April 3-4

## Jr. High Retreat

- April 17-18

Adult and youth retreat brochures are available in our churches.

Subscribe to the camp's eNewsletter at: [redwillowbiblecamp.org/subscribe.htm](http://redwillowbiblecamp.org/subscribe.htm)

[www.redwillowbiblecamp.org](http://www.redwillowbiblecamp.org) 676-2681

## ***TCM Council Highlights — October***

### **COMMITTEE REPORT:**

**Education, Youth and Family:** Potluck dinner theater on November 30 in Cooperstown.

Sign-up sheets will be put in each church for the December 6 mission trip to Northland Rescue Mission in Grand Forks. Carpools will be organized; TCM van will be used for confirmation students.

### **BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**TCM Website:** Photographers are still needed from most congregations.

**Confirmation:** Discussion on pros and cons of opening confirmation classes to younger students, on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade program, on sports events at schools and possibility of visiting with athletic directors from the schools.

**RWM/TCM Agreement:** The 2009 agreement between Red Willow Bible Camp and Tri-County

Ministry was presented as approved by the RWM board.

**TCM Council Retreat:** Will be held January 31 at Red Willow Bible Camp, 9:30-3:30. All TCM Council members are strongly encouraged to attend; former council members will also be welcome. This retreat will also be the January council meeting.

### **STAFF REPORTS:**

- Pastor Marli reported that the Seminary on the Prairie brochure is ready and will be posted on several websites. The SOP week will include an open forum on Thursday afternoon; anyone is welcome to participate. Pastor Marli and others will be replacing windows in the gym at RWBC.
- Pastor Cheri continues to work on the intern application. She distributed information on a mission challenge grant of \$500 being made available to Tri-County Ministry for the year 2009.

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Please join us for a

*Holiday Open House at the Danielsons'*

Monday, December 29

2:00 pm – 7:00 pm

at the Binford parsonage

Join us for food and conversation  
there will also be games and movies for the kids

Come in the south door to the parsonage  
or, if you prefer no steps, use the garage entrance

*We are looking forward to seeing you there!*