

NATIONAL XPRESS

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

JAN/FEB 2007 | VOLUME 1

Sundays in January

Growing Up in Christ

Worship at 9:15 and 11 a.m.
Dr. Gareth Icenogle

This sermon series, built on the book, *Discipleship Essentials*, while inspirational to the congregation at large, will be especially useful to those who have joined a discipleship group this year.

January 7

Making Disciples

January 14

Being a Disciple

January 21

Quiet Time
Rev. Eunice McGarrahan

January 28

Bible Study
Rev. Doug Learned

February 4

Prayer

February 11

Worship

February 18

Transfiguration Sunday
Guest Preacher

February 25

First Sunday in Lent
The Three-Person God

How Can I Become Involved? *Discipleship Groups Beginning Soon*

We've been talking about this and you've been asking about it... When are we going to do something about small groups?

The answer is: January 7, 2007.

Beginning with the first Sunday in January, Gareth and the pastoral staff will begin a twenty-four week sermon series based on the biblical texts in Greg Ogden's book *Discipleship Essentials*. But hearing a sermon is not enough to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Whenever we read or hear the word of God, we must engage it by thinking about it and making it a part of how we live our lives. We cannot do that alone. We need one another.

In order to provide opportunities for this kind of vital Christian growth, we are launching a ministry of discipleship groups. A team has been hard at work to get us ready for this and has named this new ministry WOW. That stands for With Out Walls and is based on the understanding that we are the church even when we are not inside the walls of National Presbyterian Church.

We're asking folks to gather weekly in groups of three or four people, at times and



places that are convenient for them. The groups would reflect on the sermon and its biblical text and work through *Discipleship Essentials*, which is available for sale at the Moehrle Bookstore. If you are already a part of a small group, of whatever size, you might want to consider joining us in our reflection on *Discipleship Essentials*.

If you can't be a part of a discipleship group, there will be other ways in which you can be a part of our common conversation about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. You can learn more at information and orientation meetings held Sundays after each service in the parlor. Watch for brochures in the literature racks and for information posted on our web site: www.NationalPres.org.

What is Connections in Ministry/Mission? *Interview with Leslie Saum by NX Editor Richard Armstrong*

RA: What exactly is the "Connections in Ministry & Missions" program and how did it come into being?

LS: It's a church-wide initiative designed to engage every member in the ministries of our church and in the missions that take place beyond our four walls. It was born out of a long church and Biblical tradition for the discovery, use, and fulfillment of unique talents in the people of God and how we use those talents to serve his Kingdom. Specifically here at NPC, it stems from Dr. Icenogle's vision for us to get to know our congregation better and for each member to be personally engaged in the life of

the church.

RA: Is this initiative in response to our recently released Strategic Plan?

LS: It is indeed. In fact, it complies with two very specific mandates in the Plan: First, to initiate a program for developing the unique giftedness of our members; and second, to improve our process for welcoming and engaging visitors to the church. But in a broader sense, this program is a response to the overall spirit and themes of the Strategic Plan.

RA: It sounds a lot like what used to be

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DEADLINES

March/April February 1

May/June April 1

July/August June 1

September/October August 1

November/December Oct 1

E-mail: XPress@NatPresCh.org
or call 202.537.7574

STAFF

Editor: Richard Armstrong

Staff Editor: Kate Brinkley

Desk Editors

Worship: Sally Kaplan

Outreach: Keith Patman

Congregational Care: Sonny Rimback

Nurture: open

Connections in Ministry *Continued from page 1*

called “The Gifts Ministry” or “New Member Connections.” How is it different?

LS: In the past, we’ve interviewed new members by checking off boxes on a form that listed their interests and experience. As a result, a new member might get ten cold calls from various committee chairmen and staff members because they checked all these boxes. Or, more likely, the information simply sat in the church data base and was never utilized at all.

In this new ministry, we’ll still be doing interviews, but they will be much more personal and in-depth. Our goal will be to develop one key area where the individual would like to serve the church ... and one key area where they’d like to be served by the church. Because it’s a two-way street — not just what you can do for us, but what we can do for you, too.

The other key difference is that we will not just be interviewing new members, but longtime members and regular attendees as well. Our stated goal is to engage everyone in the ministry and mission of the church. That’s why our interviewers will be trained to really get at the heart of what the individual needs from the church and what gifts they can offer.

RA: So if I’m a committee chairman, and I’m looking for someone who’s gifted in — let’s say, graphic design — what do I do?

LS: That’s easy. You call me. Since we’ll have this information compiled in a new data base that will be more “three-dimensional” in nature, it won’t be just a listing of a person’s interests and experiences. This data base, in effect, will be a “living library” for all staff and leadership to draw upon. But it’s more than just matching up a given job with a given skill set. It’s a way for members to channel their passions and interests in life toward serving the church, and more importantly, serving Jesus Christ’s mission on earth.

RA: Conversely, if I’m a member or a regular attendee who wants to get more involved in the church, but I’m not sure where my skills are needed, do I call you?

LS: Absolutely. I receive calls like that every day. And in most cases, we’re able to match a person’s skills and passions to a pressing need in the church. I could tell you about a dozen such miracles that have already occurred, and I’m expecting hundreds more in the future.

RA: Speaking of the future, where do you think this ministry will be a year or two from now?

LS: Our goal is to have a core of 100 trained interviewers working in this ministry within a year. We’ll be conducting interviews not only with the new member classes (which we’ve already begun), but also with existing members and regular attendees — at least 250 of them by the end of next year. We’re going to have a regular Sunday each month — perhaps the first of the month, which will be “Interview Sunday,” when we can initiate these conversations. We’re not simply going to wait

until someone shows up at a new members class, because that can take too long. In my own case, for example, I was so busy volunteering in the children’s ministry that I didn’t even have time to take the new members class until I’d been coming here for three years! So we want to be in a position where we can begin a conversation with someone after only a few visits to the church. Because the more quickly you can get someone involved in the life of the church, the sooner they’ll want to become a member.

RA: Finally, Leslie, why did you accept this position and why are you the right person for this job?

LS: My life has been a cumulative call to building community. Over the years working in volunteer leadership here at National I have been blessed through taking visions for ministry into fruition. This ministry matches my unique gifts, so I am grateful to be a part of helping as many folks as we can discover the complete joy that brings. God is doing something mighty here at NPC, and this ministry is right in the heart of that reality!

Body and Soul: Aerobics with a Christian Twist

“People do pay a lot of money to go ride on a bicycle,” says young mom Amy Thompson. People go to great lengths (and expense) to get in shape. So few know that National offers an alternative to conventional gym and exercise programs. Amy is in the know, however. She’s been attending Body and Soul exercise classes for years.

On Saturday mornings at 9 a.m., women gather in Jones Hall for the one-hour class. “It’s more than just the exercise,” says Amy. “There’s really nothing quite like it,” adds instructor Hilda Gore. Hilda is married to Mitch Gore, National’s youth director. “I started attending Body and Soul classes years ago at a nearby church and I immediately thought it would be fabulous to offer it at our own church.”

Body and Soul is an international fitness ministry that combines cardio work and strength training. One feature that makes it unique is the “soul” aspect of the program. Classes begin and end with prayer, and the exercises are performed to contemporary Christian music. Ladies of all ages and fitness levels enjoy the class. Current class attendees include Nancy Thompson (Amy’s mother-in-law), as well as neighbors from nearby.

The 10-week winter session classes have just begun. Drop by any time for a free class to see how you like it. If sign up, a modest fee covers the remaining classes in the session.

Body and Soul has been offered at National for over 10 years, but some consider it National’s best kept secret. Let’s spread the word and get stronger, physically and spiritually!

Relationships that Build Leadership in Thailand

By Laura Wallin and Claude Bennett

Acquiring the education necessary to spread the word of Christ's hope and love throughout Southeast Asia is paramount to faculty members at McGilvary College of Divinity (MCD) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Over the past three years, nine NPC members have formed friendships with these dedicated men and women by going to Thailand to help them prepare for advanced graduate programs. More relationships have developed as Thai professors have come to spend time with us here in Washington.

Students come to MCD from various countries in Southeast Asia. Many are from Thailand; some are from Laos and Cambodia. A fair number come from Vietnam, in some cases having escaped the prospect of death for their Christian faith. From Myanmar (formerly Burma), where tribal villages are ravaged and burned down, a privileged few are blessed with scholarships to MCD, where they can pursue a Master of Divinity degree.

In the interest of offering the best to these students and forming them as Christian leaders, MCD has high standards for its faculty. To maintain their positions, professors must earn an advanced graduate degree by the time they turn forty-five. Since degrees in Christian theology beyond the Master of Divinity are not offered in Thailand, candidates must go abroad to earn a Master of Theology, Master of Sacred Theology, Ph.D. in Theology, or Doctor of Theology. This usually means studying in English, so Thai professors must first pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

This is where NPC, by offering tutoring in English, helps build a bridge for them to reach their goal. Historically at MCD, a "culture of caution" had surrounded the use of English. Thais who were not expert English speakers hesitated to use the language for fear of ridicule. This attitude has waned as NPC tutors have demonstrated their own willingness to try to speak Thai, even though far from perfect. They also encourage



students to use whatever English skills they have. Strong friendships between students and tutors have supported this shift in attitudes. In just three years our eyes and hearts have witnessed God's extraordinary achievements through McGilvary's people of severely tested faith.

Did you meet the Reverend Mani Maniwong? He was one of the faculty members we tutored in 2004. Through the generous support of an NPC member, Mani came to DC for English immersion in 2005. In June 2006, he arrived home from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong with a Master of Sacred Theology degree. He is not only a popular and valued professor at MCD, but also plays a key role as "Dorm Father." His responsibilities include following up and advising students as they perform their preaching or teaching internships. Those who have met him know many lives are touched by Rev. Maniwong. NPC's support helped to make this a reality.

McGilvary faculty member Duangsuda Sribuaai hopes to study for a Ph.D. in New Testament. During NPC's 2005 and 2006 tutoring projects, Duangsuda made significant progress in her practice TOEFL scores. This progress suggests that through English language immersion, she can rise to the level of proficiency needed for admission to a Ph.D. program. NPC has approved support for

Duang'suda's travel and attendance at an international language school during March-May 2007. NPC members who have tutored at McGilvary will host Duangsuda and work informally with her on English. She will attend NPC during her stay in the area.

The relationships that NPC members have built at McGilvary were greatly facilitated by Chananporn "Oan" Jaisa-odee. Oan, faculty liaison for our tutoring project, has been with MCD since her freshman year in 1992. Already skilled in English, she passed TOEFL and was accepted into Princeton Theological Seminary. Her area of study is Christian Education. She and her husband, Song-sak, arrived in the U.S. last August and are forming friendships through visits to NPC. Oan states her sense of vocation as follows: "I strongly believe that God calls each individual in various ways, and God speaks to us through the language of everyday events. My responsibility is to open myself to conversation with God and to trust in God. I feel compelled to educate people of all ages to better know Jesus Christ, to realize that they are equally important and valuable, and to mature in their faith." Ching! Ching! (truly, truly).

For more information on NPC's mission partnerships in Thailand and other parts of the world, contact the Outreach Office at 202-537-7483.

NPC's Children "Sing to the Lord a New Song" *By Amy Thompson*

Has anyone noticed all the excitement over in the school gym each Sunday morning? Each week, nearly 100 children and youth converge on Jones Hall—entering, exiting, sitting, standing, clapping, singing—in what has become a masterful orchestration of people and schedules under the energetic direction of Youth and Children's Music Ministries Director Heather Roberts. In the last two years National's children's choirs have grown to include three choirs (Angel Choir for four- and five-year-olds, National Choristers for grades one through five, and Youth Choir for grades six and above).

While others might be daunted by the sheer numbers, ability levels, and attention spans of such a diverse group, Heather seems to take it all in stride; and, in fact, she gains momentum as the morning progresses.

"I feel so blessed and consider it an honor and privilege to be working with our children and youth at NPC. They are an amazingly talented group of kids who truly understand their responsibility in helping the congregation to allow God to touch their hearts through song," Heather says

Since September, the three choirs have performed seven times. They have sung not only for the congregation, but have been accompanied by trumpeter Adel Sanchez and participated in the Business and Professional Women's Guild's Christmas Luncheon. For the first time ever at NPC, last month they sang with the Chancel Choir at the candlelight Christmas Concert. In addition, the choirs sang last spring at Ingleside for their 100th Anniversary celebration.

Although their schedule is full, our children's choirs aren't "just one more activity." Nor is it one more distraction or form of entertainment for our kids on Sunday morning. Choir is also not about our kids learning to read and to appreciate music (which they are). It's not about giving them an opportunity to "perform" and build their confidence (which it does). And, it's



Photo by Karen Greisdorf

not about them looking and sounding great when they participate in the worship service (which they do). Children's choirs are all about our children singing praises to God every Sunday, the day God set aside for us to worship and dwell on him and his goodness.

Most of the week our children are "in the world," which makes it a challenge to get their minds to dwell on "whatever is good and whatever is pure." On Sunday morning, however, their minds are filled with wonderful words of praise that they then carry with them throughout the week. I love to hear my kids singing or humming the tune of a song from choir while they are doing homework or playing in the yard.

Can children praise God and keep the Sabbath holy without a children's choir? Of course! But what an awesome opportunity they have at National. How grateful we are that with so little effort on our part, our kids can be involved in such a great program.

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4101 Nebraska Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20016
www.NationalPres.org