

NATIONAL X PRESS

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

NOV/DEC 2008 | VOLUME 9

NOVEMBER SUNDAYS

November 2

"The Teacher Makes the Difference"

Rev. Earl Palmer, preacher

November 9

"The Time That It Takes"

Rev. Earl Palmer, preacher

November 16

"The Truth That Lasts"

Rev. Earl Palmer, preacher

November 23

"Sheer Grace"

Rev. Earl Palmer, preacher

November 30

Rev. Eunice McGarrahan, preacher

Thanksgiving, November 27

Rev. Eunice McGarrahan, preacher

To learn more about National's worship, classes, and opportunities to serve, please visit: www.NationalPres.org where you'll find our calendar of events and lots more...

Interview with Earl Palmer

Getting to Know NPC's New Preaching Pastor-in-Residence

NPC member Richard Armstrong recently spoke by telephone to Rev. Earl Palmer, our new Preaching Pastor-in-Residence.

RA: The concept of a "Preaching Pastor-in-Residence" is something NPC hasn't tried for a couple of decades. What were your initial thoughts when you discussed this concept with our search committee?

It sounded very exciting to me, because preaching and teaching are the two things I love to do most. When I retired from University Presbyterian Church (UPC) in Seattle, I wanted to remain active but I didn't want to serve as a conventional interim pastor. That's why we founded the Earl Palmer Ministries: to allow me to keep preaching and teaching in a way that would reach beyond our local community. Accepting this unique position with National Presbyterian Church fit in perfectly with that mission. And when I met some of the terrific people you have here, I became even more enthusiastic about it.

RA: You have some previous connections with NPC, both personal and professional, and you've spoken at our



retreats at Sandy Cove twice. What are your impressions of NPC and its congregation?

Louis Evans is a close friend of mine, and I've served with Craig Barnes on the Board of Princeton Theological Seminary for several years. So I have always felt close to your congregation, and we've even shared some of the same members over the years. Mike Wiseman, for example, has

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A Time for Gratitude ... and Stewardship

Be grateful during the autumn season seems to come naturally. In rural parts of our country, autumn is the time when we see the bounty of God's creation as colorful crops are harvested. We set aside a special day of thanksgiving, a time when we reflect on all that God has given us.

As Christians, we know that all of our lives come as a blessing from God. Further, we believe that our lives can only be received as a blessing. When Christians

understand this unconditional blessing, they want to give something back because our hearts are full with gratitude.

One important opportunity for expressing this gratitude is our fall stewardship campaign. When you're asked to make a commitment to give in 2009, please prayerfully consider your response to God's grace in your life. Your gifts will help God's kingdom to break out into the world by a little bit more.

NATIONAL X PRESS

DEADLINES

January/February: December 1

March/April: February 1

May/June: April 1

July/August: June 1

Editor: Kate Brinkley, 202.537.7574
or KBrinkley@NationalPres.org

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

VESPERS

Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

December 3, 10 & 17

Come to a candlelight communion service with teaching and music of the season to prepare for the coming Savior. Children's Vespers program available in the chapel.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

at 9:15 and 11 a.m.

November 30,

Rev. Eunice McGarrahan preaching

December 7, 14 & 21

Rev. Earl Palmer preaching

CHRISTMAS EVE

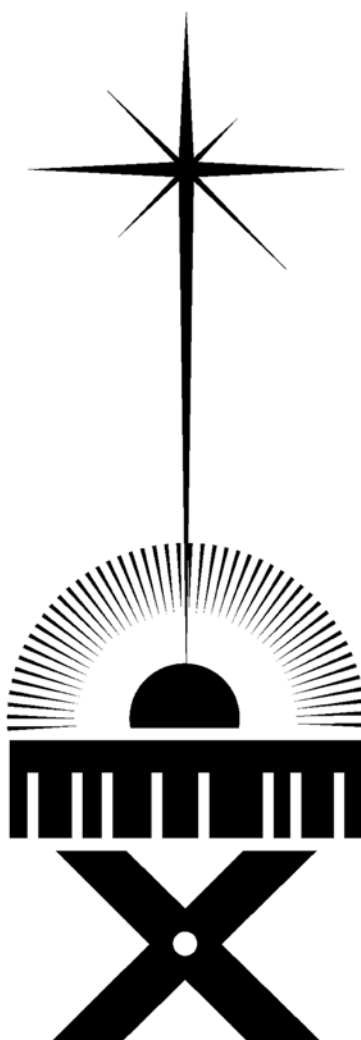
December 24

Nativity Service at 5 p.m.

The nativity story presented by the NPC community and our children and youth choirs

Candlelight Communion Services at 8 and 11 p.m.

Dr. Douglas Learned preaching



ADVENT WORKSHOP

Sunday, November 30 at 5 p.m.

Join the fun: pizza at 5 p.m., followed by worship and carols; then crafts, activities, and fellowship for the whole family.

MESSIAH

Sunday, December 7 at 5 p.m.

A Festival Choir performance of the Christmas portion of this beloved masterpiece. Accompanied by orchestra, organ, and harpsichord, we will raise our *Hallelujah!* on high.

IN QUIET SPLENDOR

Sunday, December 14 at 5 p.m.

The 67th annual Candlelight Christmas Concert of seasonal favorites. Join us for an evening of hymns, carols and other musical delights with brass, bells, harp, and organ.

Sharing Jesus' Love in a Needy World This Christmas

Is it sometimes hard to decide what to get for friends or family at Christmas because, basically, they have what they need? Or is it hard to decide what to get for Uncle Bob or Cousin Jill because you really don't know what they want?

One NPC member had those thoughts while Christmas shopping several years ago, until he encountered a project similar to NPC's Alternative Gifts Christmas Market. "The light dawned," the NPC member explained. "That's what I'd been looking for—a chance to make Christmas special, not only for the receiver, but also by helping someone else beyond my own family — it was a way to show God's love to those less fortunate.

The Alternative Gifts Christmas Market is a great opportunity to help mission partners around the world with gifts they can really use. It reawakens in all of us a sense of purpose—of being able to make Christmas special.

A New Look

"This year we're focusing on particular mission activities in which NPC members participate," says Elder Lawrence Glaser, "because we want to encourage members' involvement." Rather than display booths in Stone Hall, there'll be a Christmas tree with ornaments representing the gifts. The Market is open December 7 and 14 all morning. "We hope people will join us at the market," adds Glaser, "to make this Christmas a special occasion."

Interview with Earl Palmer

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been an Elder here and he was an Elder at the First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley where I served for 21 years. So I feel right at home here, and I've really enjoyed the occasions when I've spoken at your retreat.

RA: Do you feel that NPC's congregation is unusual because of its location, its history, and the type of people who worship here? Or is it your opinion that people are basically the same everywhere and looking for the same things from a church and a pastor?

No two churches are exactly alike. Every church has its own special character and its own mandate. UPC, for example, is sitting right next to the University of Washington, so we've taken a very special interest in reaching out to that community. I had the same situation at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, where U.C. Berkeley was literally across the street. I also preached in the Philippines during the war in Vietnam. In each case, our mandate was shaped by our location and the type of people we were drawing. The same is true here at NPC. There's an interesting mix of people in Washington. Government employees and politicians, of course, but you've also got one of the largest populations of young professionals in the country. It's an exciting place filled with interesting people. But people are people, and they all need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

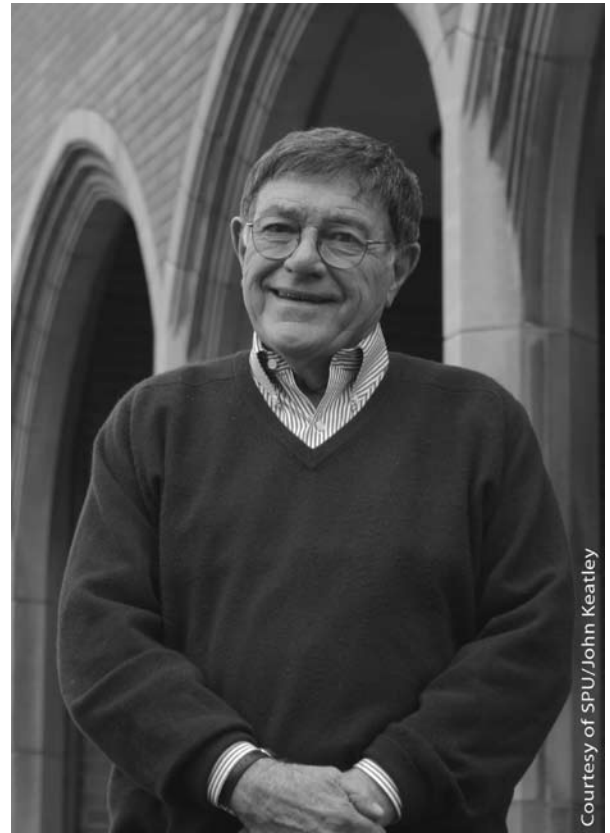
RA: You are entering a church that has been in some distress over the past few years. I'm sure you have some idea of the problems we face. What do you think you can do to help us begin the healing process here?

I believe we'll find all the answers we seek in a positive affirmation of our living center, Jesus Christ. I'm not a big one for self-analysis and self-criticism. Sometimes it's good,

but a little goes a long way. We have a phrase we use at UPC in times of trouble: "Teach your way through error." And by that we mean, don't get stuck on a dead-end street by focusing only on your problems. My great professor at Princeton, Bruce Metzger, used to say, "Invite people into a larger hope." I think that when you move toward the larger hope offered by Jesus Christ, it has an amazing healing and unifying effect. It also has a positive effect on people who are angry, or worried, or suffering from doubt. That's the approach I've always taken in my ministry, and by and large it's been validated.

RA: One of the most serious issues we've wrestled with here over the past decade is how much emphasis to put on preaching versus all the other things that a church is supposed to do. Hiring you as a preaching pastor is one way we've chosen to deal with that issue. But in your previous pastorates, how have you personally dealt with those competing demands?

EP: I don't see them as competing demands, because preaching is the center of worship, and worship is at the heart of everything the church does. The exposition of God's word is central to our Reformed heritage. It's what draws people together, what gives them their identity, their hope, and their joy. It's only because we've been "fed" in worship that we have the strength, the energy, and the motivation to reach out in other ways. As Karl Barth said, "We love because we have been loved." Preaching, teaching, and growing in common worship is where people develop a sense of confidence and joy ... and



that's what makes them want to go out and do other things.

RA: Some people say that a preacher usually has one major theme that he tries to get across to his congregation. If that's true, what particular message do you find yourself called to convey to your listeners and readers?

EP: The essence of my ministry might be expressed in the little prayer I say whenever I baptize an adult: "May God bless you in your journey so that, as you grow in age, you also grow in grace." I wish I could claim that idea was original with me, but it actually came from Father Joseph O'Callahan's famous prayer at Pearl Harbor during World War II. That's really what my ministry is all about: I want people to grow in faith. And specifically, I want them to grow in the most important aspect of faith – the grace of God.

RA: One of your books is entitled *The Humor of Jesus*. Give us your favorite example of Jesus's sense of humor.

EP: C.S. Lewis describes humor as the sudden perception of incongruity.
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Interview

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ity, and the New Testament is filled with examples of our Lord's sense of humor. Almost all of the parables are filled with humor in some way because they have that element of surprise in them. When the disciples ask Jesus if they should pay taxes to Rome, for example, he doesn't reply directly. Instead, he asks one of them for a coin. "Whose face is on this coin?" Jesus asks. "Caesar's," they respond. "So give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God." That's profoundly humorous. Any Jew would recognize it as humorous because the rabbi, or teacher, in Jewish tradition was supposed to illuminate the scriptures in a way that was both unexpected and witty. And our Lord was the master rabbi.

RA: Are you looking forward to moving from the state of Washington to the city of Washington – two very different places that happen to share the same name?

EP: Very much so. I was a political science major in college, and I've always been fascinated by what goes on in Washington. When I was at

Princeton in the 1950s, I took several trips to Washington. I liked to get a pass to sit in the Senate gallery and watch the debate. I remember seeing some of the Joseph McCarthy hearings in person. I loved the intrigue, but especially the significance of what happens here. Of course, my children and grandchildren were very excited and enthusiastic about us living here for a period of time, too.

RA: Just for fun, and to give us a sense of what interests and entertains you, tell us your favorite book, your favorite movie, and your favorite TV show.

EP: Among books I've read recently, I'd have to say *Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger or Ann Rice's *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*. "Casablanca" is my favorite movie of all time because of the great characters in it, but "Singing in the Rain" is probably my favorite musical. As far as TV shows go, my wife and I enjoy "CSI: Miami" and my son turned us on to "The Office," which we enjoy very much.



Unicameral Board

Bylaws Changes Proposed

All NPC members are invited to the following meetings to discuss and vote on proposed changes to the NPC bylaws regarding board structure. The session has received and approved a recommendation to change our board governance from bicameral (a board of elders and a board of trustees) to unicameral (a board of elders, composed of people who have spiritual and financial gifts, as well as responsibilities). The congregation is invited to consider the changes at a Nov. 9 meeting and vote on the proposed changes on Nov. 16.

November 9

Informational Meeting

12:15 p.m. in Stone Hall

Discuss changes in governing board structure

November 16

Congregational Meeting

12:15 p.m. in the sanctuary

Vote on changes to NPC bylaws

December 7

Congregational Meeting

12:15 p.m. in the sanctuary

Elect officers for 2009 and receive

2009 budget for review and questions

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