



A weekly news update from the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley in Iowa and Nebraska. Distributed by email only to the churches, Clerks of Session, ministers, Presbytery Officers, committee members, and others who wish to be on the list. Published by the presbytery. ****There is a new address for the office as of October 15, 2025: PO Box 390113, Omaha, NE 68139-0113****

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MM 2026 #12

A place of prayer and reflection

Eternal and life-giving God, we thank you that you are our only comfort in life and in death. We come before you today as people with grateful hearts, thankful for your loving kindness, your trustworthy promises, and your never-failing grace and love for us in Jesus Christ. Lord, hear our prayers.

Loving God, our world is full of death and dying. We are tempted to believe that death has the final word. Help us remember, celebrate and embrace the Easter message of life everlasting, not just as hope for the future but as strength, power and motivation for living today. May we believe and show in all we do that nothing in all creation, not even death, will be able to separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God of grace and God of glory, your Word is full of testimonies to your live-giving power and purpose. We thank you for believers who have shared their experiences of your grace and life that we may come to believe. Lord, help us live as faithful followers of our risen Lord. May all that we do point to the source of our life and hope, Jesus Christ, who was dead but lives again by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[We ask these things in the holy name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.]



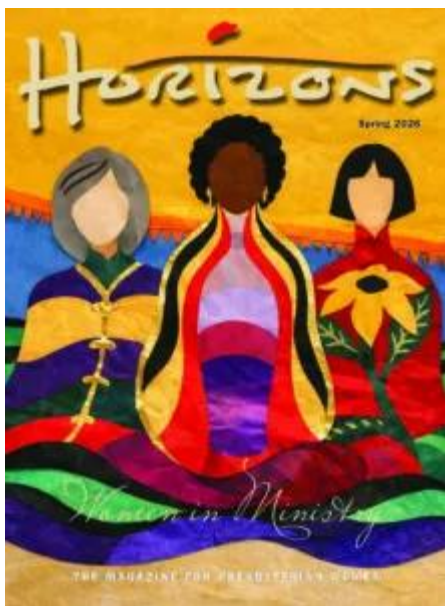
Prayer written by Philip Gladden for Presbyterian Outlook Worship on April 12, 2026

NEWS FROM THE PC(USA)

PC(USA) CELEBRATES 70 YEARS OF WOMEN CLERGY

Remembering our pioneering Presbyterian pastors

March 30, 2026 Rhashell Hunter Presbyterian News Service



LOUISVILLE — In 2026, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) celebrates 70 years of women clergy. Twenty years ago, the PC(USA) held anniversary events to celebrate the 50th year of the ordination of clergywomen, 100th anniversary of women deacons and the 75th anniversary of women elders. These events were a result of General Assembly action referred to the Women's Ministries unit who were charged with planning these celebrations.

Presbyterian Women in the PC(USA) is honoring ministry milestones in the [Spring 2026 issue of Horizons magazine](#). The theme of the spring issue is "Women in Ministry." There are online and print versions published by Presbyterian Women in the PC(USA).

At the event held at [Fourth Presbyterian Church](#) in Chicago, the [Rev. Margaret Towner](#), the first woman ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA), was one of the featured preachers. She was quiet, humble and welcoming, characteristics that she undoubtedly employed as she navigated her ministry in 1956 as the first woman to serve in this role in the Presbyterian Church. Despite the attention and recognition she received at her ordination — her photo was featured in Life magazine and other publications—Towner said she "chose to avoid the limelight and continue my work in the local congregation." No one will ever fully understand her experience. Suffice it to say that she paved the way for many others to follow her.

In 2026, Presbyterians celebrate 120 years of women deacons and 95 years of women ruling elders. [Sarah Dickson](#) was the first woman ruling elder, and [Tillie Paul Tamaree](#) was the first Indigenous woman ruling elder, both ordained in 1930. There have been numerous women deacons over the past 120 years.

There are other pioneering women whose names are not in record books, including new immigrant women and those in the LGBTQIA+ community who, even today, are becoming the first women of their ethnicities, cultures and genders to be ordained in the geographical areas in the church.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/3/30/pcusa-celebrates-70-years-women-clergy>

PC(USA) REPRESENTATIVES ENGAGE WITH CUBAN LEADERS DURING UN CONFERENCE

Delegates to the UN Commission on the Status of Women and Presbyterian leadership heard concerns from Cuban representatives during the event

March 30, 2026 Presbyterian Communications & Interpretation Presbyterian News Service

NEW YORK — As the first week of the [70th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women](#) wound down, two sets of Presbyterian representatives visited the [Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations](#) at a time the island nation finds itself at the center of United States foreign policy discussions.

Ernesto Soberón Guzmán, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the UN, speaks with Presbyterian leaders visiting the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations. (Photos by Rich Copley)

The Rev. Jihyun Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Executive Director of [Presbyterian Life & Witness](#), met with Ernesto Soberón Guzmán, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the UN, the morning of March 12. Joining Oh were Sue Rheem, Presbyterian Representative to



the UN and Manager of the [Presbyterian Ministry at the UN \(PMUN\)](#); the Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Director of [Advocacy for the PC\(USA\)](#); and Pam Snyder, Moderator of [Presbyterian Women \(PW\)](#).

Later the same day, several Presbyterian delegates to the annual Commission joined a group organized by [Ecumenical Women at the United Nations](#) for a dialogue with Cuban delegates to the Commission, Ambassador Yuri A. Gala López, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, and other Cuban leaders.

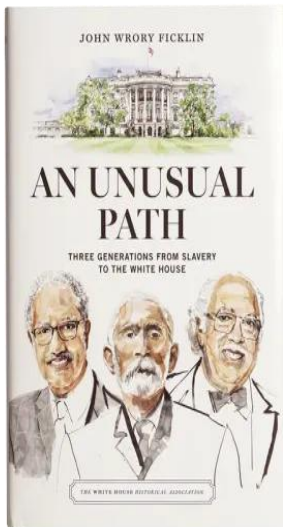
The conversations touched on numerous issues, including the fuel blockade and U.S. intervention for regime change, the impact of U.S. sanctions on Cuba, human rights and the status of women in Cuba, Cubans living in the U.S., and what Cuban officials considered overlooked positive stories about their country, including the development of vaccines during the Covid pandemic. <https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/3/30/pcusa-representatives-engage-with-cuban-leaders-during-un-conference>

AUTHOR RECOUNTS HIS FAMILY'S HISTORY OF WHITE HOUSE SERVICE

John Wroly Ficklin's grandfather was born enslaved. His father was the White House maître d', and he himself was a longtime staffer for the National Security Council

March 31, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — *John Wroly Ficklin stopped by the "A Matter of Faith: A Presby Podcast" virtual studios recently to talk about his new book, "[An Unusual Path: Three Generations from Slavery to the White House.](#)"*



Ficklin's grandfather, James Strother Ficklin, was born enslaved. After the Civil War, he purchased 37 acres of land in Virginia, where he farmed and raised 10 children including the author's father, John Woodson Ficklin, who would put in 37 years of service in the White House and rise to maître d' hotel. His son would serve seven presidents as a staff member of the National Security Council.

Ficklin's son is a close friend of Simon Doong, who along with the Rev. Lee Catoe host "A Matter of Faith," a weekly podcast. Listen to their 45-minute conversation with Ficklin [here](#).

Catoe asked Ficklin what role faith played in his family's story and his own White House experience. Ficklin said it's a question he struggled with until his pastor, the [Rev. Dr. Dedrick O. Rivers](#), wrote a blurb in support of Ficklin's book.

"The Ficklin family story is a living testament to God's faithfulness across generations," Rivers wrote. "This book is more than history. It is an inspiration and a beacon of hope for all who believe in the power of God's covenant blessings." Ficklin's grandfather never knew who his father was. "It's assumed his father was a white man," Ficklin told the hosts. He was conscripted into the Confederate Army, where he served as a waterboy. After the war, he purchased land in Rappahannock County, Virginia, and helped raise his 10 children.

"My dad told stories of growing up in a very poor household. He said he wore patched-up clothing and worn-out shoes, or no shoes," Ficklin said. His father was

a faithful church-goer who was asked several times to serve as a trustee, declining every invitation because he didn't have the time.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/3/31/author-recounts-his-familys-history-white-house-service>

CHURCHES CAN CHANGE THEIR STORIES FROM ANXIOUS TO HOPEFUL

Storyteller extraordinaire Mark Yaconelli delivers a plenary session address during the recent Luminosity Conference

March 31, 2026 Chuck Toney for the Presbyterian Foundation Presbyterian News Service

Mark Yaconelli remembers receiving a story Bible from his grandmother when he was five years old.

"It had all the glossy pictures; I especially remember an image of Jesus carrying a lamb," Yaconelli recalls. "The cover was what looked like Jesus's passport photo. I wondered what it would be like to be able to read this massive, thick book all by myself."

Her gift became the foundation of his belief that "story is relationship — the morals, values, and plot lines that teach us how to live."



Mark Yaconelli speaks at the Luminosity Conference, presented by the Presbyterian Foundation to spark inspiration and innovation in church leaders.

Yaconelli is founder and director of [The Hearth](#) and a community builder, retreat facilitator, and author of "[Between the Listening and the Telling: How Stories Can Save Us](#)." He delivered one of the plenary session addresses at the inaugural [Luminosity Conference](#), sponsored by the [Presbyterian Foundation](#) and held March 9-11 in Orlando, Florida. The conference was designed to offer pastors and church leaders inspiration and thoughts on innovation.

Stories energize us

Yaconelli shared his nostalgia for the stories of his childhood — "[The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe](#)" and tales of wayward ships floating into the fog off the shore on Nova Scotia. In a time when the world can seem "horrifying," it is the telling of stories that anchors us in what we believe, he said.

"Remember what we know is true: Each of us came into the world as light. When a baby comes into a room, everyone smiles," he said. "That was you at one point! You were the light, hungry for experience, hungry for connection, so excited by every new face. That was you; that was me. And we didn't know what to do with all of that energy. One of the ways we figure it out is that people tell us stories that let us experience courage and creativity. They tell us stories that project the light into the future."

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/3/31/churches-can-change-their-stories-anxious-hopeful>

FAITH COMMUNITIES HAVE A BIG ROLE TO PLAY IN MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

A webinar put on by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and its partners delivers a how-to for faith leaders

March 31, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service



LOUISVILLE — During Tuesday's second of six online installments in a series called the Disaster Care Academy offered by [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) and its partners, participants learned how faith communities can play a vital role in prevention, early intervention and resilience-building when it comes to mental health and the avoidance of drug and alcohol addiction.

Emily Morrow-Mueller is senior prevention programs manager for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services (contributed photo).

Emily Morrow-Mueller, the senior prevention programs manager for the [Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services](#), led Tuesday's 90-minute webinar.

Before getting to how faith communities can play what is a significant role in the fight for a healthy society, Morrow-Mueller offered descriptions of promotion, prevention, treatment and maintenance.

Promotion is about helping people thrive by improving mental and emotional health for everyone, she said. Examples run from more neighborhood bike paths to improved sleep habits.

Prevention is reducing risk and protecting mental health early on. It can be universal, such as anti-bullying programs; selective, including offering support groups for at-risk groups; and educated, targeted at people with early warning signs including alcohol and drug abuse. Prevention strategies can work upstream to eliminate or reduce the root causes of, say, substance abuse, or downstream.

Treatment and maintenance are included in recovery. "It's about getting better and staying well over time," she said.

Risk factors are predictive for half or less of the population, while protective factors are predictive in up to 80% of the high-risk population, she said.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/3/31/faith-communities-have-big-role-play-mental-health-and-substance-abuse-prevention>

ECUMENICAL PARTNERS NAME EMPIRE, KILLINGS AND A GLOBAL CALL TO PEACE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Webinar links extrajudicial killings to militarization and urges solidarity grounded in 'shanti, shalom and salaam'

April 1, 2026 Beth Waltemath Presbyterian News Service

An international ecumenical webinar titled "Unpeace in the Philippines" convened Thursday, March 19, bringing church leaders, Filipino advocates and global partners together to confront what speakers described as a continuing crisis of violence, impunity and extrajudicial killings in the Philippines — a crisis they linked directly to global militarization and empire. Presbyterian Life & Witness global ecumenical liaisons (GELs) the Rev. Cobbie Palm and the Rev. Cathy Chang were in attendance, as was the Rev. Ellen Sherby, manager of the International-based GELs. They have made the full webinar and a selection of its keynotes accessible [here](#). "The webinar is a glaring example of why global ecumenical partnerships matter," said Chang. "The general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches gave a very compelling speech about empire, peace and justice, while our partners in the Philippines talked about how they've been confronting the violence of empire." (Illustration by omersukrugoksu | iStock)



The online forum was hosted by the [National Council of Churches in the Philippines](#), the [International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines](#) and the [Global Ecumenical Forum for JustPeace in the Philippines](#), known as GEF-PH. It unfolded against a backdrop of widening global conflict, including war in West Asia, rising U.S.-China tensions in the Asia-Pacific and expanding military alliances.

Co-moderator of the webinar, the Rev. Dr. Patricia Lisson, who serves as vice chair of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines and is a minister in the [United Church of Canada](#), opened by situating the Philippines within this wider moment of geopolitical instability.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/1/ecumenical-partners-name-empire-killings-and-global-call-peace-philippines>

THIS DAWNING LIGHT

The Rev. Dr. John Ashworth Gardner and the Easter Sunrise Service

April 1, 2026 McKenna Britton, Presbyterian Historical Society Presbyterian News Service

On April 10, 1955, at around 5:42 a.m., dedicated attendees of the annual Easter Sunrise Service atop Mt. Davidson gathered for the 33rd year in a row. The service proceedings were broadcast over KYA from 5:30 to 6:15, for those not yet out of bed. The Rev. Dr.



John A. Gardner, the new executive director of the San Francisco Council of Churches, preached the Easter Sermon, which he'd titled "Hail Him Lord of All!" Gardner had been elected to his position in November, just five months prior.

Easter sunrise service atop Mt. Davidson, San Francisco, 1946, Religious News Service photograph collection.

Gardner was an ordained Presbyterian minister and organizational leader involved in the height of the ecumenical movement of the 1950s and 1960s in both San Francisco and Chicago. Gardner was born on November 17, 1904, in England. In 1913, his family arrived in the U.S., settling in Chicago. He took to the pulpit of Essex Community Church in Chicago in October 1926. "I have been especially interested in developing group activities as a feeder to church work. In this way, in spite of the depression, Essex Church was transformed into a church of young people," Gardner writes in a statement regarding his

education and work experience, found amongst his personal papers, which live at the Presbyterian Historical Society. He remained at Essex until January 1937, working hard within his community to build relationships that would help the parishioners survive the Great Depression. In the first month of the new year, he became the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Midland, Michigan, where he remained until he was called to work with the San Francisco Council of Churches in 1954.

Gardner was executive director of the San Francisco Council of Churches for three years. The first year, he delivered the sermon at the Easter Sunrise Service, where he is quoted as saying: "We, too, have been waiting through the night for this dawning light. And the night itself is a symbol of every dark, uncertain passage. With the new day we sense the miracle of the trees and the sky and the

sea. Here in this sacred spot we gather as the children of God, as those who seek light, with hearts open to the central miracle of existence.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/1/dawning-light>

MRTI PUBLISHES 2026 SHAREHOLDER RESOLUTION DIRECTORY WITH PROXY VOTE RECOMMENDATIONS

Guide urges shareholders to call for corporate responsibility around AI usage and other human and environmental justice concerns

April 1, 2026 Layton Williams Berkes Presbyterian News Service

As the 2026 proxy voting season begins, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Committee on Mission Responsibility through Investment (MRTI) is urging companies to adopt just policies with regard to climate change, AI usage, immigration and other social and environmental concerns. MRTI’s 2026 Shareholders Resolution Directory was published in March and includes a long list of resolutions for which MRTI recommends proxy voter support. The guide is available [here](#).

This year, MRTI reviewed 412 resolutions filed by values and faith-based investors at 331 companies, a substantial increase from the 219 resolutions submitted to 165 companies in 2025. The expansive number of 2026 resolutions includes 24 new resolution topics.

Each new topic was considered individually, with the committee reviewing and offering its recommendations for voters. Resolutions with proxy-voting recommendations established in past years are generally acted upon as a block reaffirmation, though any committee member can request reconsideration of a particular resolution.

These recommendations are intended to guide how Presbyterian-affiliated investors vote their shares — a process that allows shareholders to pressure companies to change their policies and practices.

The PC(USA) is a primary filer — along with [As You Sow](#) — on one new 2026 resolution submitted to Meta, with a similar resolution filed at Alphabet, Inc.

According to MRTI, the new resolution calls upon each company named to “issue a report explaining how it will meet the climate change related commitments it has made on greenhouse gas emissions, given the massively growing energy demand from artificial intelligence and data centers that the company is planning to build.”

Katie Carter, Director of Faith-Based Investing and Shareholder Engagement for Presbyterian Life & Witness, recently offered insight and rationale for this resolution on a webinar hosted by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). Carter noted that “Meta’s direct emissions from its data center energy use have risen 223% since 2019 and Alphabet’s total emissions have increased by 51% since 2019.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/1/mrti-publishes-2026-shareholder-resolution-directory-with-proxy-vote-recommendations>



SUSTAINING THE WEARY

Recently returned from an ecumenical solidarity visit to Cuba, the Rev. Jihyun Oh has Holy Week hope for people in exile



April 1, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

An ecumenical delegation worships at a Cuban church on Palm Sunday (photo courtesy of the World Communion of Reformed Churches).

LOUISVILLE — Fresh off [an ecumenical solidarity visit to Cuba](#), the Rev. Jihyun Oh used the prophetic call from [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#) as the scriptural basis for the homily she delivered online during Wednesday’s Chapel Service.

Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Executive Director of Presbyterian Life & Witness, described the call on Isaiah’s life, “a call to sustain the weary, the weary who have been living in exile, the ones who have been separated from their homes,” including “the soil they know and the familiar sounds, perhaps the wind blowing through familiar trees and valleys,” and “the foods that provide comfort.”

Isaiah “is called to sustain the weary who are living in profound separation — physical, emotional and spiritual separation — even if they are with family and others they know,” Oh said. “What God gives the prophet for this call is a trained tongue so that the prophet knows how to sustain the weary.”

The word for “training” used here can refer to teaching about one’s tradition, Oh said. “The prophet is given language and knowledge and skills so the prophet knows how to sustain the weary with a grounding in tradition,” she said, “a grounding in their sense of self and to their connection to the broader people of God.”

We are told that the prophet listens every morning — “listens to the teachings, listens to the reminders, listens to the grounding that the prophet needs to be able to sustain the weary,” she said. That assurance has been welcome news for Oh in recent days as she journeyed to Cuba and back, observed March 31 as the Transgender Day of Visibility, and thought about her own family’s history and the history of Korea, including its occupation by Japan and imperialism by China, as well as its history of immigration. “That has made me wonder about exile in a different way,” she said, “wondering about who is exiled or living in a sort of exile today.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/1/sustaining-weary>

GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS TO SERVE AS BACKDROP FOR ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Theme invokes responsibility to take care of God’s Creation

April 2, 2026 Darla Carter Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Ecumenical Advocacy Days returns to Washington, D.C., April 20-22, with a focus on “Protecting People, Peace and Planet.”

Starting with opening worship and ending with Lobby Day, EAD 2026 will bring together Christians from various faith traditions for inspiration, learning and a call to remind Congress of the need to care for everything that belongs to God.

“Given the many challenges we face, it is critical that people of faith come to Washington, D.C. to raise our voices,” according to promotional materials for the event. Psalm 24’s declaration that the Earth is the Lord’s and everything in it “reminds us that we are bound to one another in responsibility and can only be human together.”

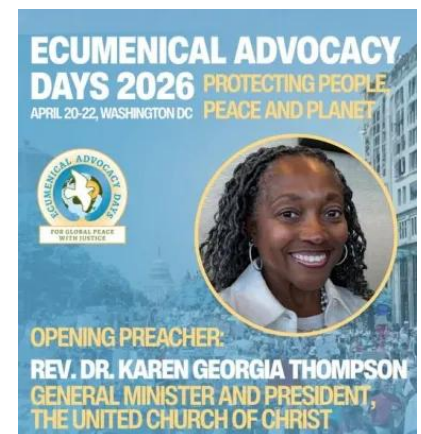
The main venue for EAD 2026 is [Capitol Hill United Methodist Church](#), 421 Seward Square SE.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is one of several co-sponsors.

Opening worship on Monday, April 20, will feature the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, general minister, president and chief executive officer of the United Church of Christ, who is set to preach that evening.

Thompson is the first woman — and first woman of African descent — to serve as UCC’s leader, and she was [elected president](#) of the World Communion of Reformed Churches last fall in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/2/global-climate-crisis-serve-backdrop-ecumenical-advocacy-days-washington-dc>



UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE ANNOUNCE NEW FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Named to honor Dr. Donald Bloesch, the new campus ministry fellowship is designed for graduate students

April 2, 2026 University of Dubuque Theological Seminary Presbyterian News Service



DUBUQUE, Iowa — A new fellowship program at the University of Dubuque and University of Dubuque Theological Seminary will provide graduate students the unique opportunity to pursue life together in collegiate ministry while obtaining a master’s degree.

The Donald Bloesch Fellowship will place those accepted into a UD/UDTS master’s degree program at the center of Campus Ministry, assisting in the areas of relational, worship and discipleship ministries. Bloesch Fellows’ responsibilities may include overseeing small groups, providing musical leadership for chapels, helping to coordinate worship services, preaching, developing a team of students to support chapel webpages and social media, and more. Bloesch Fellows will serve

Campus Ministry for the 2026-2027 academic year, with the potential for renewal in subsequent years.

“The context of collegiate ministry is a wonderful place for future pastors to experience and learn the dynamics of relational ministry. So, whether a candidate senses a call to congregational or collegiate ministry, this is a significant opportunity to be mentored while pursuing theological studies,” said the Rev. James Gunn, the Edwin B. Lindsay Chaplain and dean of chapel. Bloesch Fellows will be granted tuition remission in exchange for 20 hours of work per week. They will also receive a \$500 travel allowance to attend the annual theology conference sponsored by Theology Matters. Additionally, in recognition of Bloesch, his seven-volume [Christian Foundations](#) series will be given to each Bloesch Fellow.

Applications are now open. For more information and to apply, please go [here](#).

Qualifications for Donald Bloesch Fellowship include giftedness for collegiate ministry, theological alignment with the Edwin B. Lindsay Chaplaincy Fund, capacity for rigorous studies, and emotional and spiritual maturity.

The Donald Bloesch Fellowship is named after Dr. Donald Bloesch, professor of theology emeritus at UDTs who served as professor of theology from 1957 until his retirement in 1992. He taught hundreds of students at the seminary and thousands more through dozens of published works. Bloesch authored numerous books, including “Essentials of Evangelical Theology”; “The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation”; “Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times”; and the Christian Foundations series which has been hailed as “evangelical theology at its best.” A past president of the American Theological Society, he was widely regarded as one of the leading evangelical theologians in North America with a reputation for outstanding scholarship and creative thinking. All who encountered Bloesch knew him to be a person of gracious spirit and generous personality. He died on August 24, 2010.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/2/university-dubuque-theological-seminary-university-dubuque-announce-new-fellowship-program>

SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

Two senior leaders in the PC(USA) discuss their recent ecumenical solidarity visit

April 2, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Just two days after returning from an ecumenical solidarity visit to Cuba, the Rev. Jihyun Oh and the Rev. Jimmie Hawkins said they marveled at the role the church plays in a Cuba that’s long suffered from an embargo — Cubans use the term “blockade” — that started with President Kennedy and has intensified in recent weeks under President Trump.

From right to left are the Rev. Joel Ortega Dopico, The Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, The Rt. Rev. Anthony Poggo, the Rev. Canon David Ulloa Chavez, the Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, the Rev. Jihyun Oh, the Rev. Dr. Michael Blair (partially hidden) and the Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock (photo courtesy of the World Communion of Reformed Churches).



“We were featured on the [local] news the three days we were there,” said Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of Presbyterian Life & Witness. “One of the things the church partners talked about was how to continue advancing the role of church in Cuban society and what that looks like, and the important community work they’ve been able to do.”

“We had really good discussions on religious freedom” with Cuban government officials, said Hawkins, the PC(USA)’s advocacy director who first traveled to Cuba in the 1990s. “The gist was Cuba is still evolving” and government officials there “are starting to learn the church is vital in their work.”

The two PC(USA) senior leaders joined ecumenical partners including the [World Communion of Reformed Churches](#), the [World Council of Churches](#) and numerous other international church partners. In [a statement](#), ecumenical leaders said that partners have for many years “expressed their concerns regarding the grave humanitarian and human rights impacts of the unilateral economic embargo” imposed on Cuba by the United States “in violation of numerous UN General Assembly resolutions calling for it to be lifted.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/2/solidarity-with-cuba>

NEWS FOR THE PRESBYTERY OF MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY

UPCOMING PRESBYTERY MEETINGS

May 7 – 5:30 in person – Location to be determined
August 15 at Calvin Crest
November 7 - 10am-12noon in person - Location to be determined

Your church could host a Presbytery meeting!!

Please check the Events Calendar on the PMRV website for specific committee meetings and their location.

Presbyterian Church of the Cross



This is the 37th season of free concerts

Vesper Concerts provides the greater Omaha community with unique, memorable and accessible music experiences that engage, educate, and inspire both patrons and performers. We are excited to announce our 2025-26 Season! From jazz to folk and everything in between, there is something for everyone in our 37th year of free concerts.

All performances take place at the Presbyterian Church of the Cross. Call 402.333.7466 or check out their website: www.churchofthecrossomaha.org

THEOLOGY ON TAP

What's better than talking theology? Talking theology over lunch with the chance for good beer! You are invited to Theology on Tap on Thursday, April 16th. **THEOLOGY ON TAP MEETS ON THE THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH**, at 11:30 – 1:00 at the Brazen Head Irish Pub (319 N. 78th Street). Join us at our reserved table to have a great lunch and talk theology with colleagues. What theological issue is at the top of your mind just now? Share your thoughts and hear the thoughts of others...just as John Calvin intended! For more information, please contact Bob Keefer @ keefer.robert@gmail.com Sponsored by the Presbytery's Worship and Spirituality Committee.



Dear friends of our Presbytery: NICARAGUA PARTNERSHIP

Our partners in Nicaragua have completed and distributed the school uniforms, backpacks, and supplies that the people of our Presbytery have so generously funded! Pictured are the children who received packets this year and the members of the Cooperative who made them.

We are committed to providing support for packets again in 2027, so your contributions will continue to help school children in the city of La Concepción, Nicaragua. Also: we are planning to send a group from Missouri River Valley to be present next January when the uniforms and supplies are distributed!

For more information about our partnership with churches and pastors in Nicaragua, contact Bob Keefer (keefer.robort@gmail.com) or Josh Widman (josh.widman@gmail.com).



Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Nicaragua Partnership

Caring & Sharing

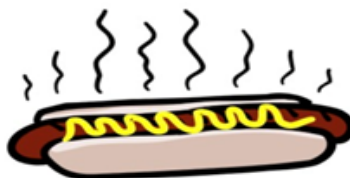
EARN
20%
DRIVE THRU
OR
DINE-IN!

SUNDAY
APRIL 19
11 am - 9 pm

Grab your family and friends and join us at Don & Millie's! Twenty percent (20%) of every dollar spent on great food and drink will go right back to our organization!...See you there!

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84th &
"Q" Streets
593-6099



THE LUNCH BUNCH... Tuesday, April 21th at 11:30am at the Arboretum Village, 8141 Farnum Drive, Omaha. This is open to all active and retired pastors, their spouses and surviving spouses. The Arboretum provides a nice menu to choose from. Please plan to pay with a credit or debit card as they are unable to take cash. If you wish to attend, please make a reservation with Cindy Harvey at 308-224-0476 or crharv@aol.com by Thursday, April 15th. It's always a lively time and we hope you will come and join us.



First Mondays

The Palestine Justice Network of the PC(USA) invites you to First Mondays: Christlike conversations on Palestine and Israel; scripture and theology; and the mission of Jesus in the lands of the Bible today!

First Mondays

The next Gathering: April 6, 2026 - Location to be announced or call below!
6:30-8:30pm

Questions: [pnj.pmr@gmail.com](mailto:pjn.pmr@gmail.com) or 210-478-7672

Nebraska Presbyterians Foundation

Apply for a Grant

If your church is located in Nebraska and your congregation has an outreach or mission project which demonstrates putting your faith into action or reaching out to your neighbors in need, consider applying for a grant to help fund your idea! The grant application process starts twice each year, and you may apply either June 1 or December 1. For more information on the grant process, please visit their [website](#) or contact Audrey Richert or 402-420-9877.

Emergency Assistance Funds

The Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation offers financial assistance for PCUSA pastors or a surviving spouse who is experiencing an urgent financial crisis. Applicants must be an active or retired installed or commissioned pastor who has, or is currently serving, a Nebraska congregation and currently residing in Nebraska. For more information on the Kessler Fund, please visit their [website](#) or contact Audrey Richert at 402-420-9877. [Email Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation](#)



Sit & Sip: Women Connecting Over Coffee

A Gathering of Friends



SLAP PW Sit & Sip

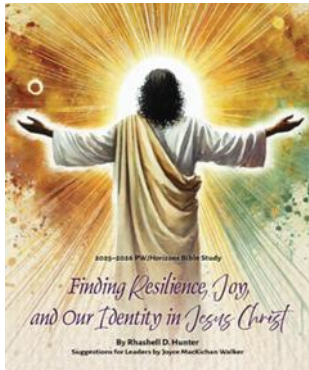
Join other Presbyterian Women from the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for a monthly round table discussion on issues prominent in today's world.

Our Sit & Sip events will be held via Zoom from 11 a.m. to noon Central Time. So, grab your favorite beverage, get comfortable, and join the conversation!

Our next meeting is on April 25th: Topic to be announced

To register, please contact Kathleen Keefer at [kathleenkeefer20@gmail.com] for the Zoom link.

FINDING RESILIENCE, JOY AND OUR IDENTITY IN JESUS CHRIST



We will meet on the following dates: April 27; May 18 at 6:30 pm CT

You must register to receive the Zoom link by sending an email to kathleenkeefer20@gmail.com

You can purchase the Bible study (cost is \$14.00) through Presbyterian Women - <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/current-bible-study/>



OPSF RETREATS IN 2026



WELLSPRING OF WELL-BEING

TAPPING INTO OUR CREATIVE POWER TO RECLAIM WHOLENESS

DATES: APRIL 26-29

LOCATION: CEDAR VALLEY, WEST BEND, WISCONSIN

LEADER: JOE DAVIS

LEARN MORE: <https://omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=df47e0b165a2313aae68d581e&id=c8c94be9ec&e=8162e3efab>

REGISTER: <https://omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=df47e0b165a2313aae68d581e&id=071c8ffd6a&e=8162e3efab>

LIVING VESSELS

MUSIC & LITURGY AS STORYTELLING

DATES: NOVEMBER 9-12

LOCATION: HEARTLAND RETREAT, PARKVILLE, KANSAS

LEADER: KARL HEIMBUCK

LEARN MORE: <https://omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=df47e0b165a2313aae68d581e&id=4d68442436&e=8162e3efab>

REGISTER: <https://omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=df47e0b165a2313aae68d581e&id=039996c90e&e=8162e3efab>



Climate-informed Ministry Cohorts: A Continuing Education Opportunity for Clergy

Ready to inspire your congregation to care for creation and act on climate change...but feel you need to learn a lot more yourself first? Iowa Interfaith Power & Light's new Climate-informed Ministry Cohorts are here to guide you. Our new 1-year program helps clergy and their congregations to become leaders in environmental stewardship. Through mentorship, training, and connections with other faith leaders, Iowa clergy will gain tools to bring climate-conscious practices and resilience to their faith community and its ministries.

Join this network of faith leaders working together to instill hope, take action, and grow sustainable, empowered communities. Learn more and apply at <https://iowaip.org/cohorts>.

Are You Called to Climate Action?

Iowa Faith and Climate Network invites you to take part in our annual 1-day conference on faith and climate action, **Called to Climate Action**. The conference takes place on **Saturday, March 21** from **9 AM - 5 PM** at **St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids**. Come to engage with other churches and experts on topics like climate storytelling, Iowa's water challenges, and small-scale farm-based solutions. Both clergy and laypeople are invited, so bring a group and get trained together! Space is limited, so get details and register today at <https://iowafaithandclimate.org/ctca>.

Ready to lead your congregation in faithful climate action?

Across Iowa, congregations are stepping forward to meet the spiritual and moral challenges of a deepening climate crisis. Will yours be among them? The **Climate-informed Clergy Cohort** equips clergy to lead with theological depth, pastoral sensitivity, and practical skill on the defining issue of our time. Through guided reading, hands-on projects, expert presentations, and an in-person retreat, participants engage topics such as ecotheology, eco-grief, the arts as a doorway into environmental conversation, and building resilient communities.

Clergy participants receive a \$1,000 stipend, and their congregations may apply for up to \$1,000 in additional funding for a significant climate-focused initiative. This is more than a learning opportunity—it is an invitation to lead courageously and faithfully in this moment. Learn more and apply today: <https://iowafaithandclimate.org/cohorts>

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF THE MASTER SAVE THE DATE TO SAVE CREATION!!



HOW HILLSIDE SOLUTIONS
**TO RECYCLE
& COMPOST**

CREATION CARE WORKSHOP

We are called to be good stewards of the Earth. Come learn how simple actions like recycling and composting can help protect God's creation. Join us in the Fellowship Hall at noon.

Fellowship Hall
4-19-26 | 12:00 - 1:30 PM

enjoy light refreshments & presentation

**PCM is an Earth Care Congregation.
This workshop is open to all so invite a friend or two!**

PRESBYTERY EVENT CALENDAR

April 5, 2026 – May 9, 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
5 Resurrection of the Lord/Easter Day One Great Hour of Sharing Building Congregational Vitality Sunday	6 First Monday	7 Social Justice & Peacemaking	8 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom International Roma Day	9 Christian Education Thursdays in Black	10	11 Black Maternal/Birthing Health Week begins
12 2 nd Sunday of Easter	13 Holocaust Remembrance Day	14	15 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom Stewardship of Resources	16 Thursdays in Black Worship & Spirituality Theology on Tap FELD	17 International Day of Farmers' Struggles	18
19 3 rd Sunday of Easter	20	21 Lunch Bunch Leadership Team Meeting	22 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom Caring for God's Creation – Earth Day	23 Thursdays in Black	24 Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day	25 World Malaria Day
26 4 th Sunday of Easter	27	28 FELD COM/COC Mission & Evangelism	29 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom	30 Thursdays in Black	May 1 National Mental Health Month begins; Asian American & Pacific Islanders Heritage Month Begins; May Friendship Day; Foster Care Month Begins	2
3 5 th Sunday of Easter Older Adult Week begins; Legacy Giving Sunday	4	5 SJP (Social Justice & Peacemaking) Committee Meeting via Zoom National Day of Awareness and Action for Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People	6 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom	7 Thursdays in Black National Day of Prayer; Path Building to Just Peace; Moving Beyond Militarism	8	9 World Fair Day

Please check with the Presbytery Office for specific meeting information

Living in a world without violence against women and children. Pause for a moment of silence on Thursdays at noon your local time to remember and honor those who have died at the hand of sexualized or gender-based violence. Go online at <https://www.ecumenicalwomenun.org/thursdays-in-black> and commit to the pledge below:

I commit to: **Thursdays in Black.**

In solidarity. In protest. In mourning. For awareness and In hope. By supporting to wear black on Thursdays, I stand

- In solidarity with 1 in 3 women worldwide who face violence in their lives
- In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form
- In mourning for men, women and children who are harmed and killed in sexual violence
- For awareness and knowledge about the challenges of sexual and gender-based violence.
- In the hope that a different reality is possible. MAKE THE PLEDGE. #THURSDAYS IN BLACK. STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE.



Presbytery Prayer Calendar

April 6, 2026 – May 23, 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5	6 We pray for the work and ministry of Dwight Williams, Honorably Retired We pray for the work and ministry of the East Iowa Presbytery	7 We pray for the work and ministry of Paul Williams, Anderson Grove We pray for the work and ministry of the Homestead Presbytery	8 We pray for the work and ministry of Mark Witmer, Honorably Retired We pray for the work and ministry of the John Knox Presbytery	9 We pray for the work and ministry of Anderson Grove We pray for the work and ministry of the Milwaukee Presbytery	10 We pray for the work and ministry of Arabic Christian Fellowship We pray for the work and ministry of the Minnesota Valleys Presbytery	11
12	13 We pray for the work and ministry of United Church of Avoca We pray for the work and ministry of the Missouri River Valley Presbytery	14 We pray for the work and ministry of Bethany Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the North Central Iowa Presbytery	15 We pray for the work and ministry of Carson Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Northern Plains Presbytery	16 We pray for the work and ministry of Carter Lake Community Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Northern Waters Presbytery	17 We pray for the work and ministry of Center Ridge Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Prospect Hill Presbytery	18
19	20 We pray for the work and ministry of Presbyterian Church of the Cross We pray for the work and ministry of the South Dakota Presbytery	21 We pray for the work and ministry of Presbyterian Church of the Master We pray for the work and ministry of the Twin Cities Presbytery	22 We pray for the work and ministry of College Springs Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Winnebago Presbytery	23 We pray for the work and ministry of Discovery Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Synod of Lincoln Trails	24 We pray for the work and ministry of Dundee Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Blackhawk Presbytery	25
26	27 We pray for the work and ministry of Faith Presbyterian Church - We pray for the work and ministry of the Chicago Presbytery	28 We pray for the work and ministry of Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Great Rivers Presbytery	29 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church – Bellevue We pray for the work and ministry of the Midwest Korean American Presbytery	30 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church - Essex We pray for the work and ministry of the Ohio Valley Presbytery	1 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church – Omaha We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	2
3	4 We pray for the work and ministry of Florence Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	5 We pray for the work and ministry of Fort Calhoun Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	6 We pray for the work and ministry of Gethsemane Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	7 We pray for the work and ministry of Hope Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	8 We pray for the work and ministry of Korean Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	9
10	11 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Missouri Valley We pray for the work and ministry of the Wabash Valley Presbytery	12 We pray for the work and ministry of Mount View Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Whitewater Valley Presbytery	13 We pray for the work and ministry of Murray Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Synod of the Living Waters	14 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Neola We pray for the work and ministry of the East Tennessee Presbytery	15 We pray for the work and ministry of New Horizon Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Holston Presbytery	16
17	18 We pray for the work and ministry of New Life Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Middle Tennessee Presbytery	19 We pray for the work and ministry of Riverside Parish We pray for the work and ministry of the Mid-South Presbytery	20 We pray for the work and ministry of Peace Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Mississippi Presbytery	21 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Plattsmouth We pray for the work and ministry of the North Alabama Presbytery	22 We pray for the work and ministry of Red Oak Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Sheppards & Lapsley Presbytery	23
24	25 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Shelby We pray for the work and ministry of the South Alabama Presbytery	26 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Shenandoah We pray for the work and ministry of the St Andrew Presbytery	27 We pray for the work and ministry of Sudanese American Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Transylvania Presbytery	28 We pray for the work and ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Western Kentucky Presbytery	29 We pray for the work and ministry of Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church We pray for the work and ministry of the Synod of Mid-America	30

